

VIKRAMADITYA'S THRONE

This was no mere perch for any monarch – the goddess Parvati herself embellished it with her thirty-two beautiful companions, whom she first cast into stone. Eventually King Vikramaditya received the throne as a gift from Lord Indra, but he little realised that it would one day be used to remind the world of his virtues and guide future rulers to greatness.

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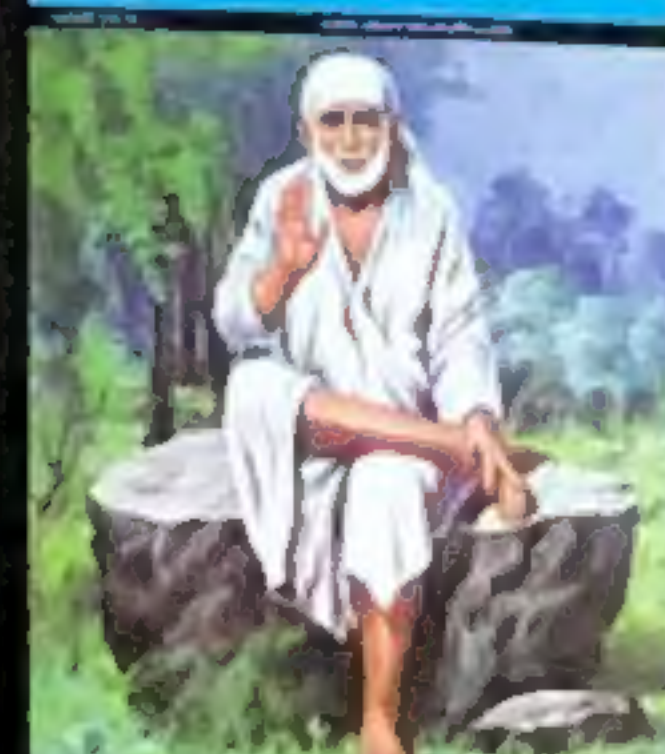
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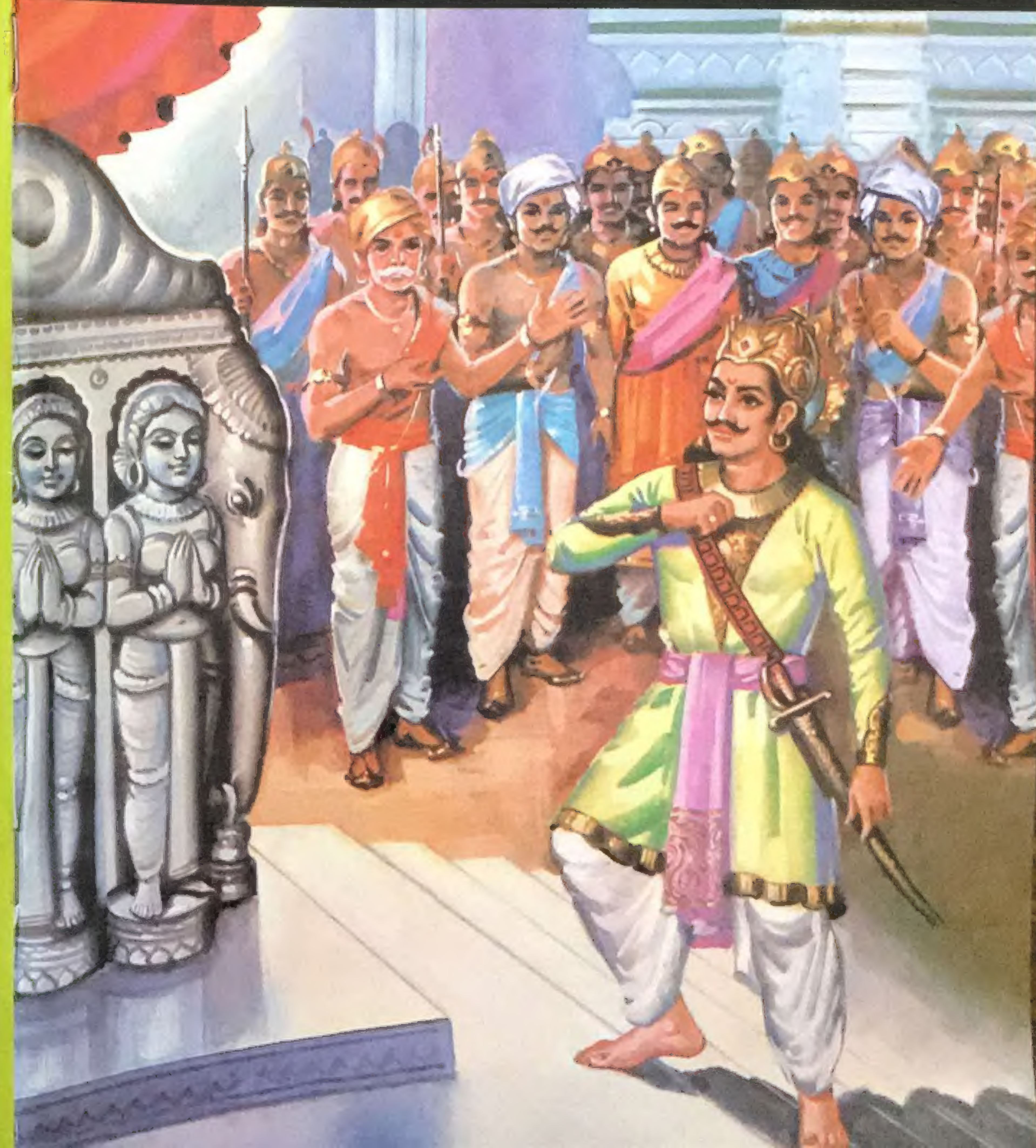
FABLES &
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VIKRAMADITYA'S THRONE

A SPECIAL SEAT FOR A SPECIAL MONARCH

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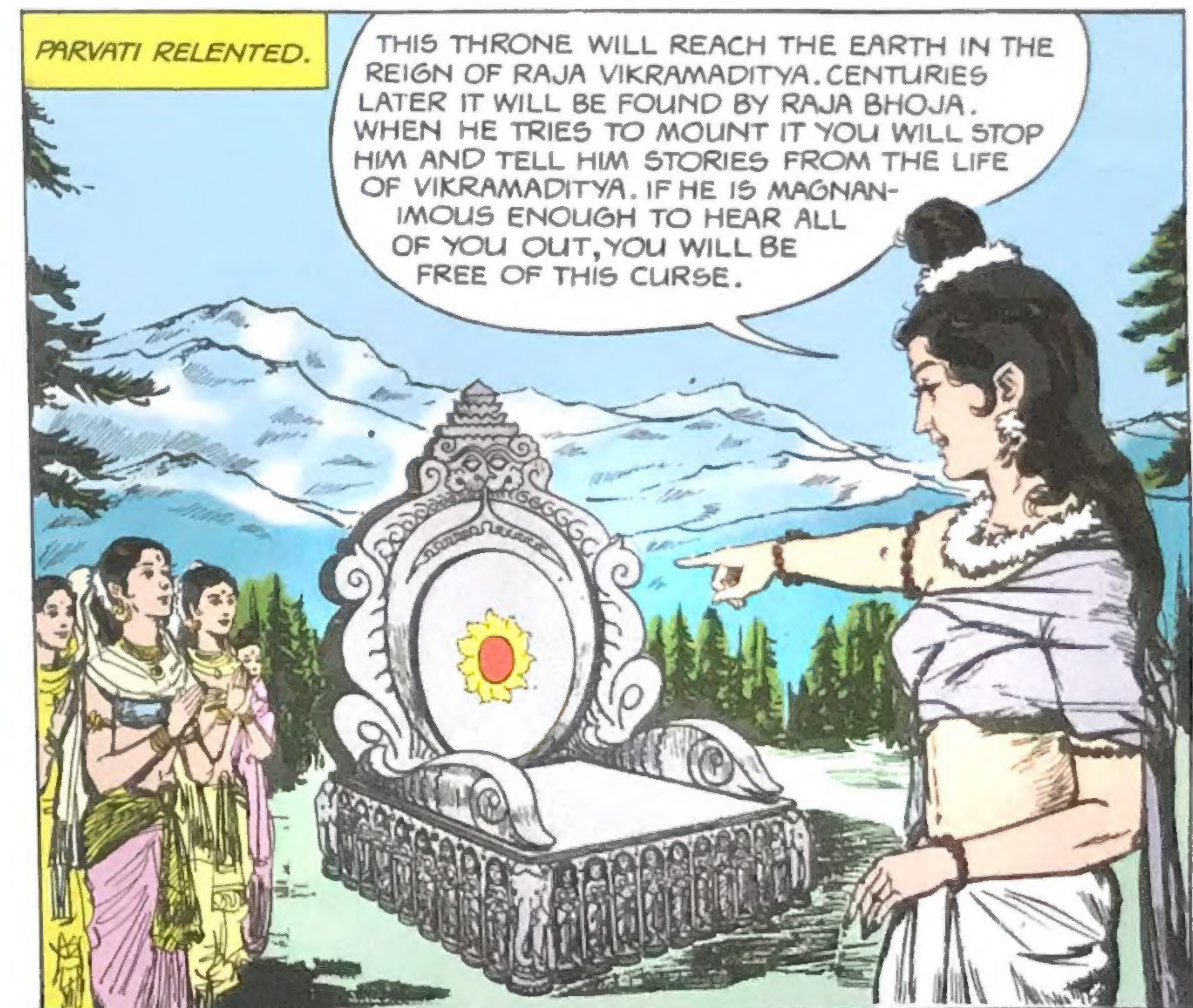
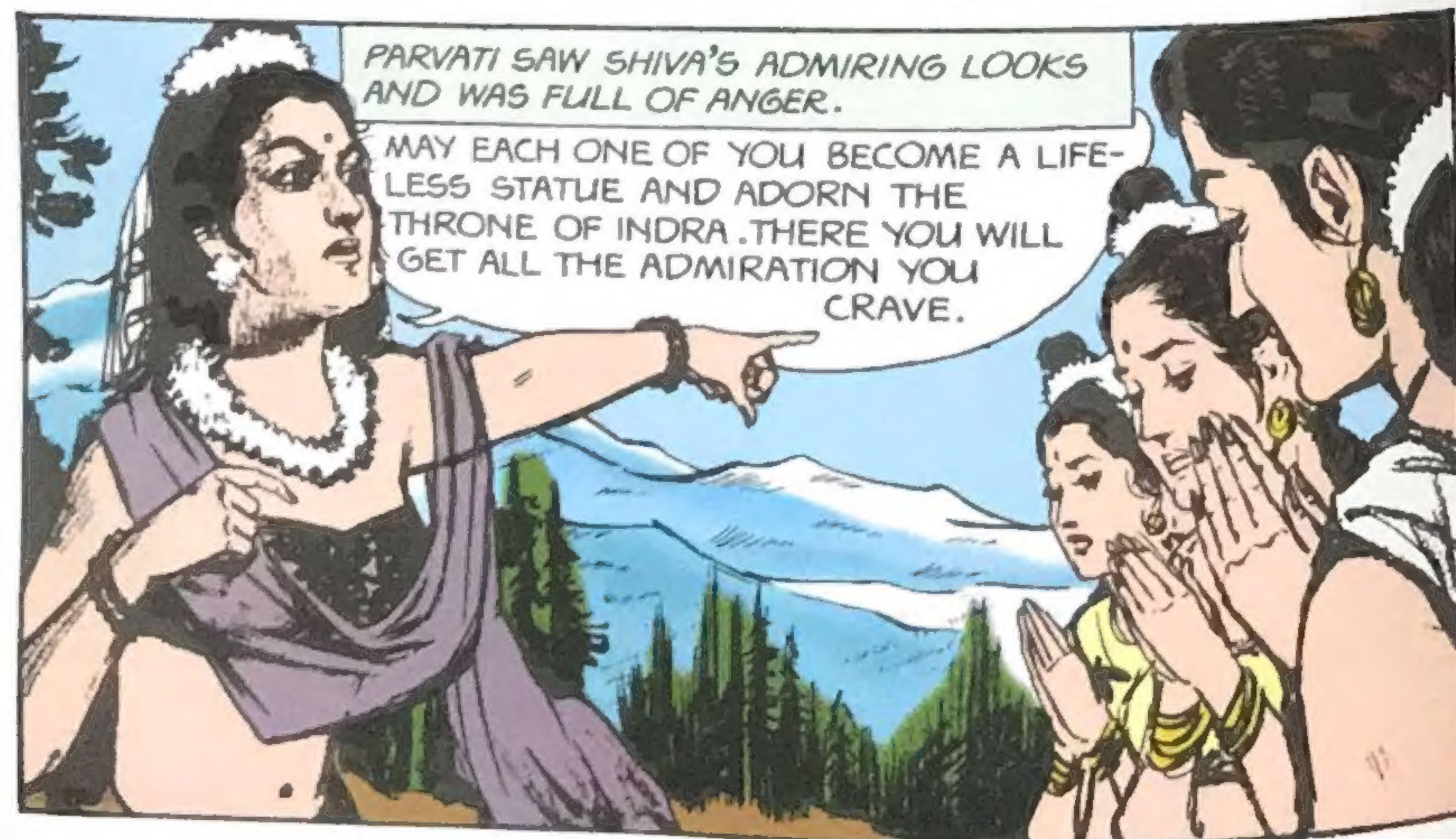
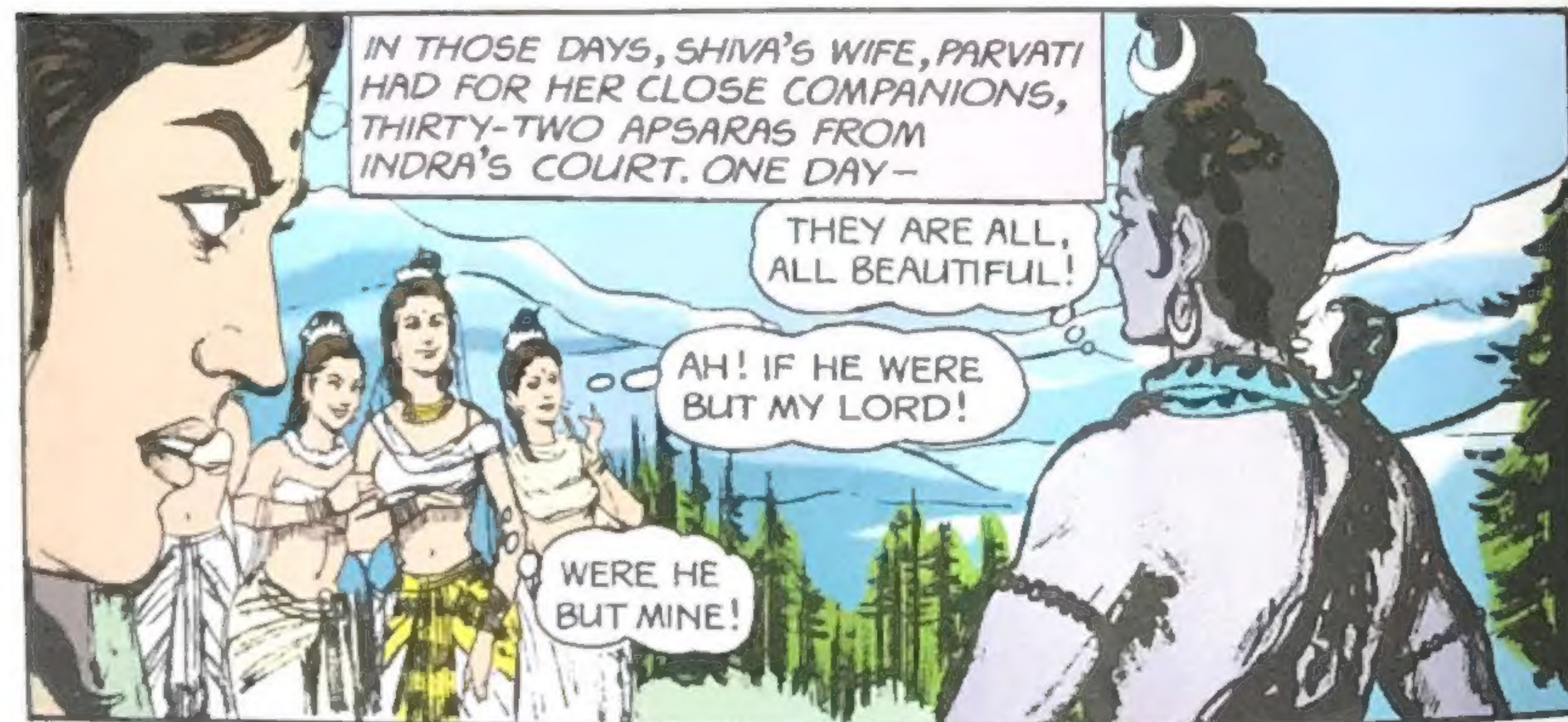
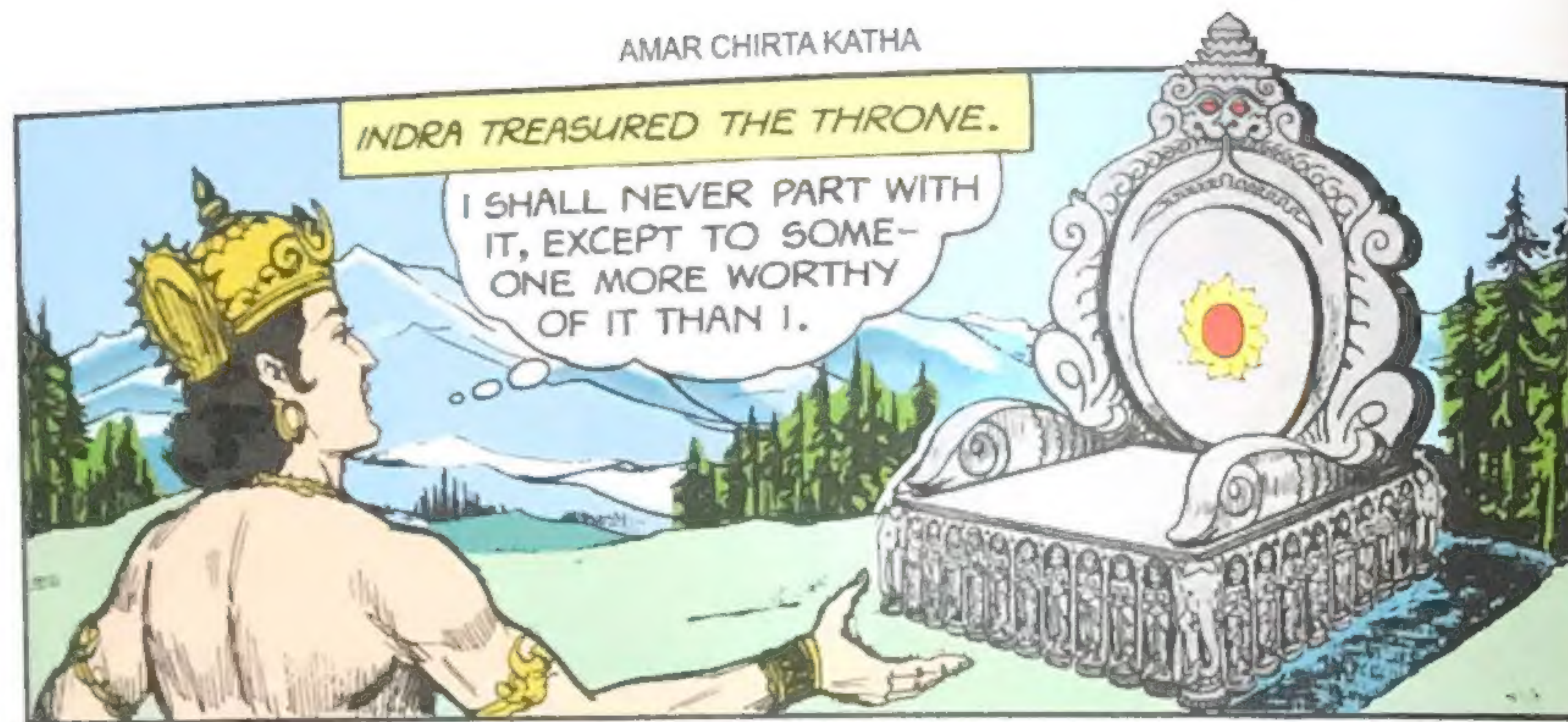


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VIKRAMADITYA'S THRONE



INDRA, KING OF THE GODS, HAD PLEASSED SHIVA. AS A REWARD
SHIVA GAVE HIM AN EXQUISITE THRONE.



MEANWHILE ON EARTH, IN THE CITY OF UJJAINI, THERE REIGNED A KING CALLED BHARTRIHARI, WHO LOVED HIS WIFE ANANGASENA, DEARLY.



DEAREST, YOU ARE MY VERY LIFE.

SO BLIND WAS HIS LOVE THAT HE TOOK A VOW.



I WILL NOT OUTLIVE MY WIFE.

PARVATI GAVE HIM A FRUIT.



EAT IT. IT WILL GIVE YOU BOTH.

FULL OF JOY, THE BRAHMAN TOOK THE FRUIT.

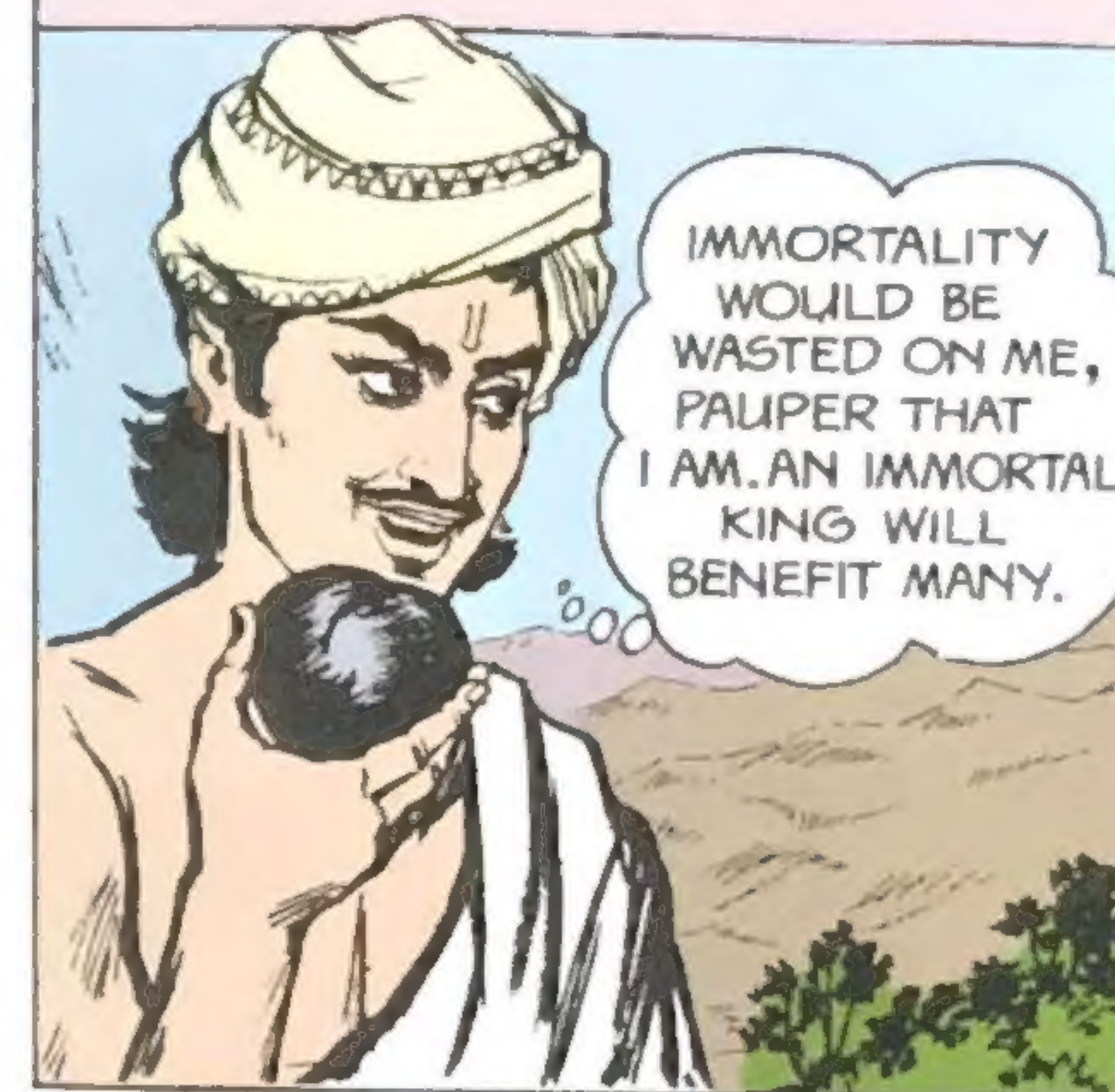
IN THAT SAME CITY THERE LIVED A LEARNED BUT POOR BRAHMAN, A DEVOTEE OF PARVATI. ONE DAY—

I AM PLEASED. CHOOSE A BOON FOR YOURSELF.

O GODDESS, GRANT ME EVERLASTING YOUTH AND IMMORTALITY.



AS HE WAS ABOUT TO EAT IT—



IMMORTALITY WOULD BE WASTED ON ME, PAUPER THAT I AM. AN IMMORTAL KING WILL BENEFIT MANY.

HE GAVE IT TO BHARTRIHARI AND TOLD HIM OF ITS PROPERTIES.



IN RETURN, I GRANT YOU LANDS AND RICHES.

AFTER THE BRAHMAN HAD LEFT —



HOW CAN I EAT IT AND OUTLIVE MY WIFE!

HE SENT FOR HER.



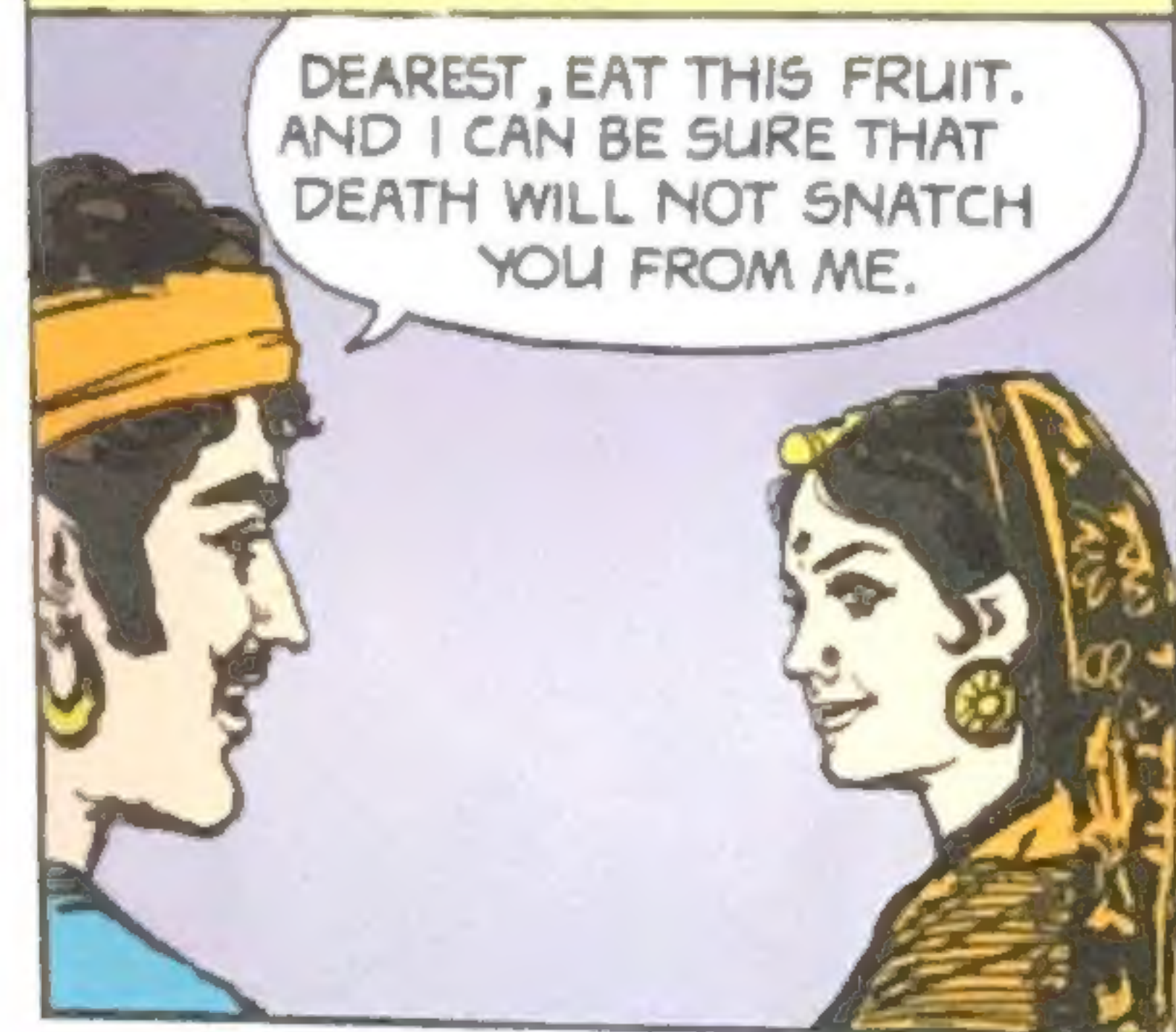
BELOVED, EAT THIS FRUIT AND PRESERVE YOUR YOUTH AND LIFE FOREVER.

MY LORD! I AM OVERWHELMED!

BUT ANANGASENA LOVED ANOTHER.



THE STABLE-BOY, UNFAITHFUL TO THE QUEEN, GAVE IT TO HIS BELOVED—A MAID.



THE GIRL WHO CARRIED THE COW-DUNG WAS OVERJOYED.

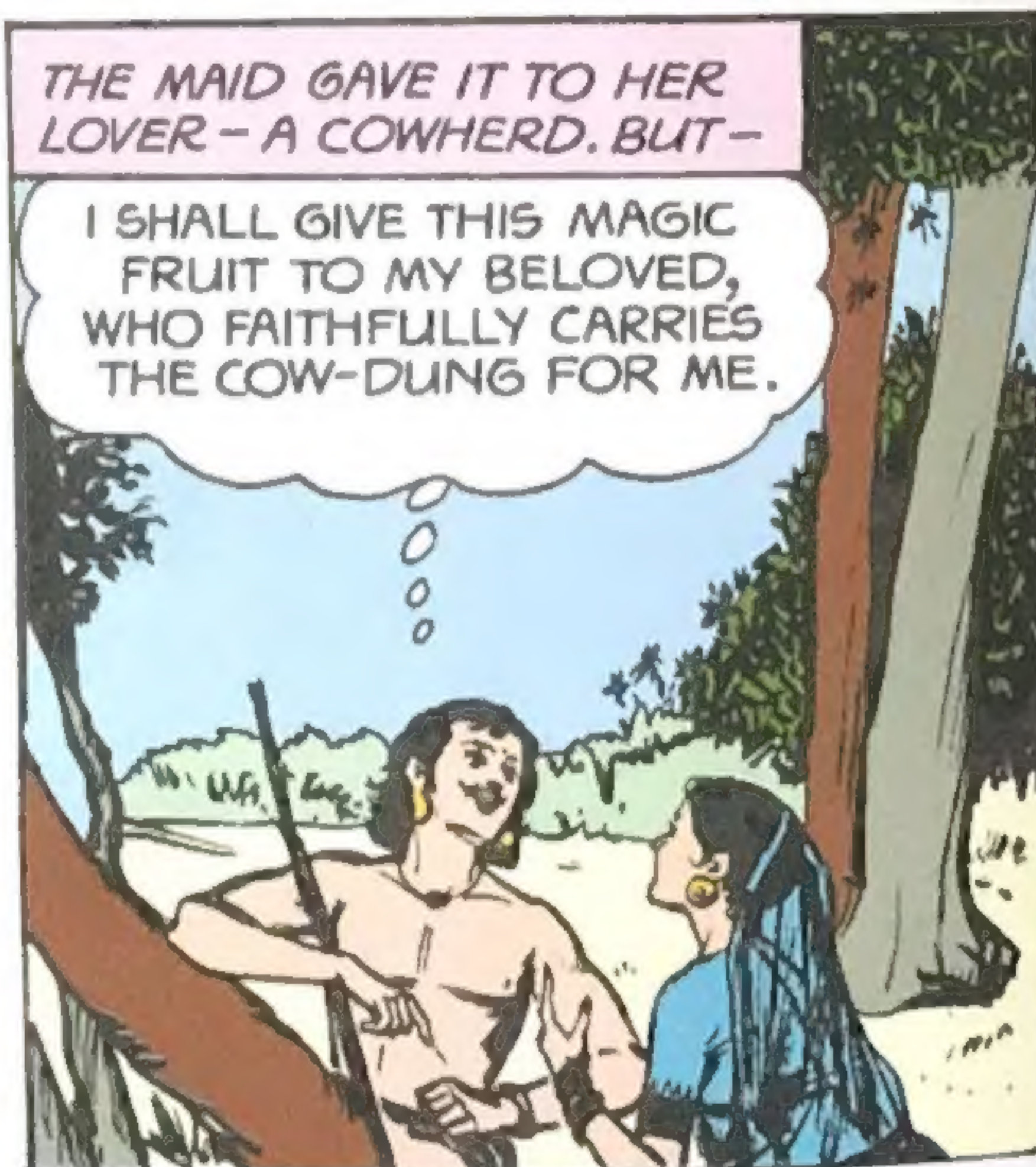


SHE SENT FOR THE YOUTH.



THE MAID GAVE IT TO HER LOVER—A COWHERD. BUT—

I SHALL GIVE THIS MAGIC FRUIT TO MY BELOVED, WHO FAITHFULLY CARRIES THE COW-DUNG FOR ME.



SHE THREW THE FRUIT ON TOP OF HER BASKET OF DUNG AND WALKED MERRILY DOWN THE ROAD.



JUST THEN BHARTRIHARI, OUT ON A HUNT, PASSED THAT WAY.

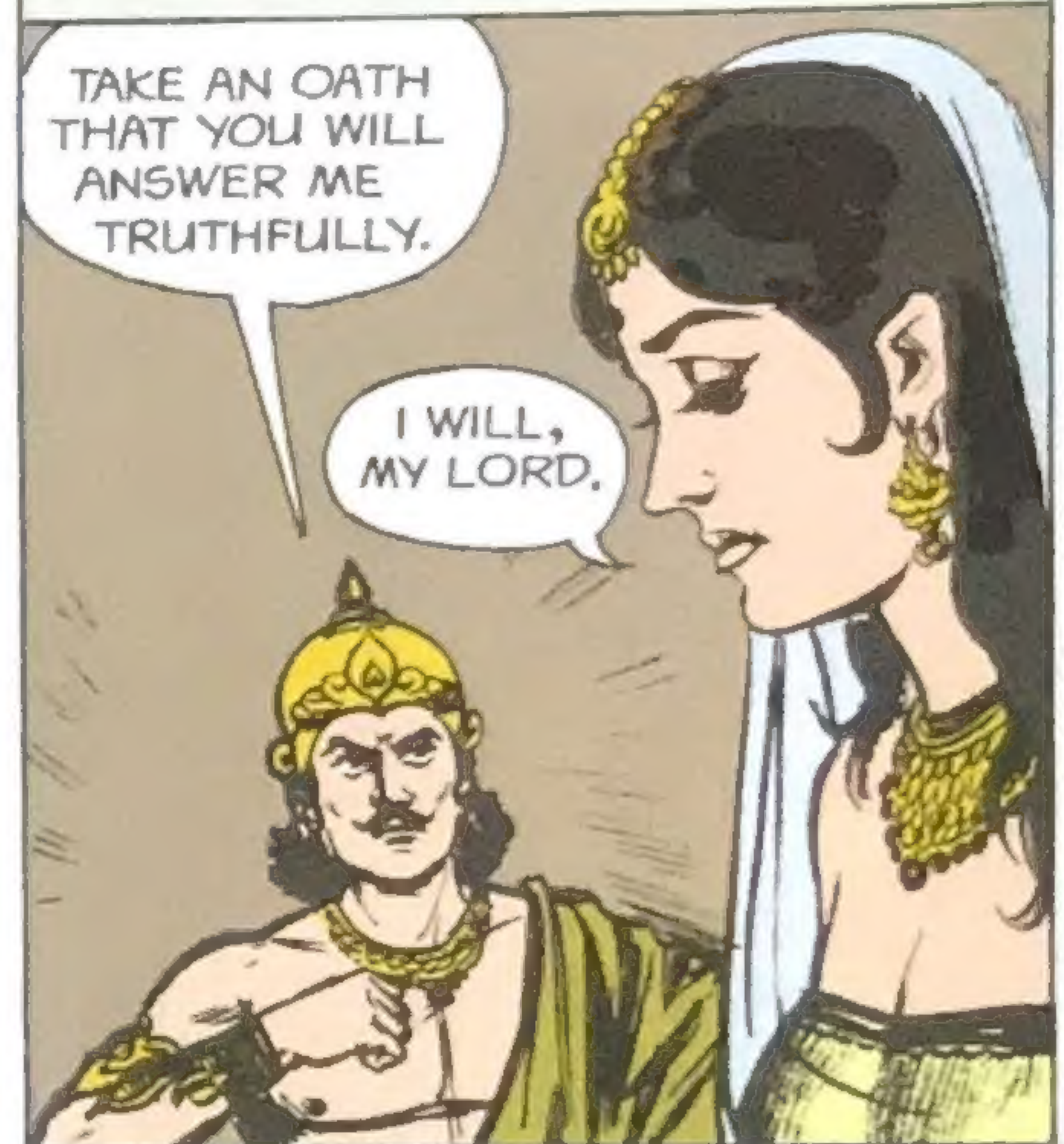


WHEN BHARTRIHARI LEARNT THE TRUTH HE WAS UTTERLY DISGUSTED WITH THE WORLD.

THERE IS NO GREATER ENEMY THAN ATTACHMENT, AND NO GREATER HAPPINESS THAN RENUNCIATION.



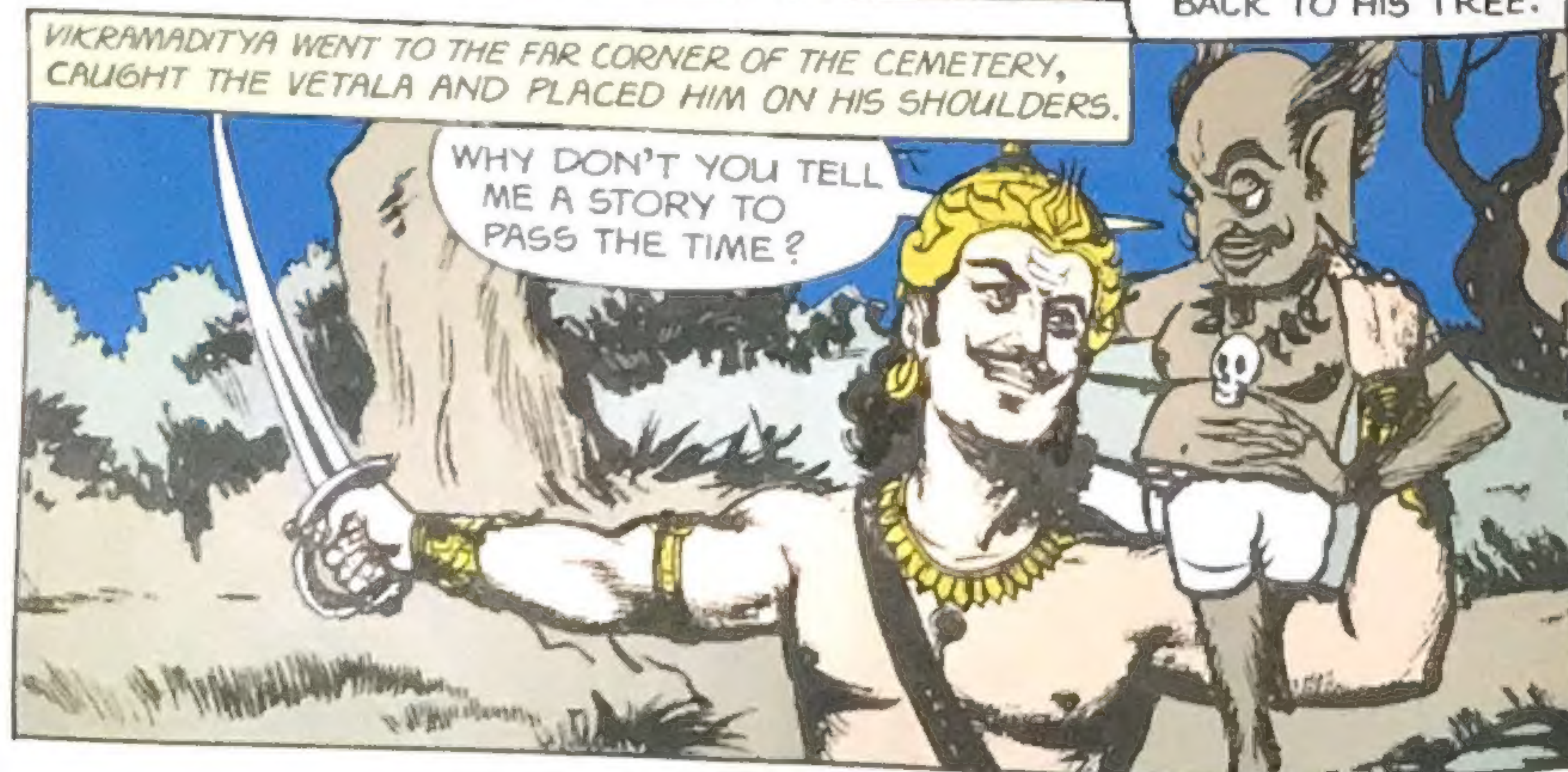
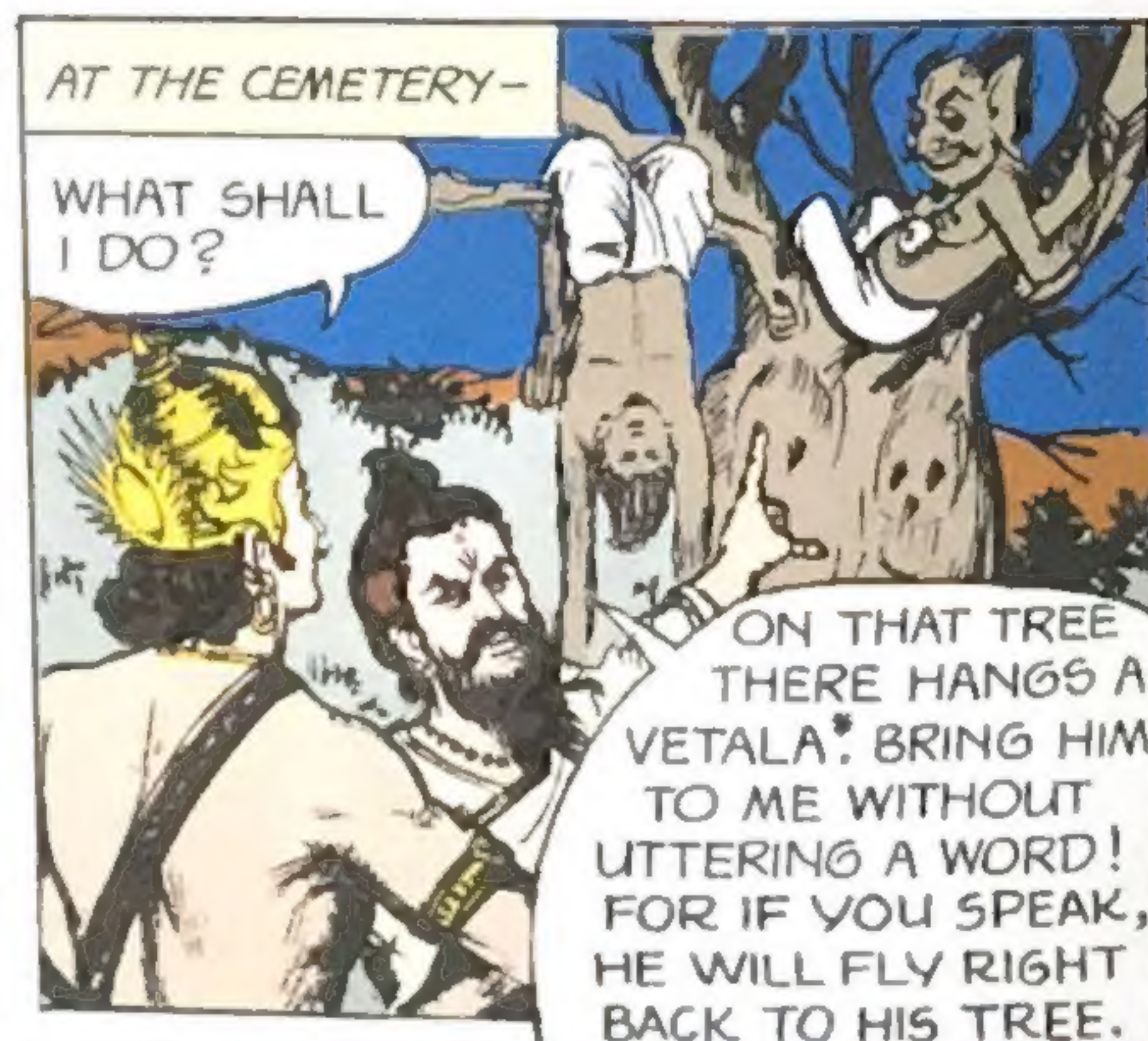
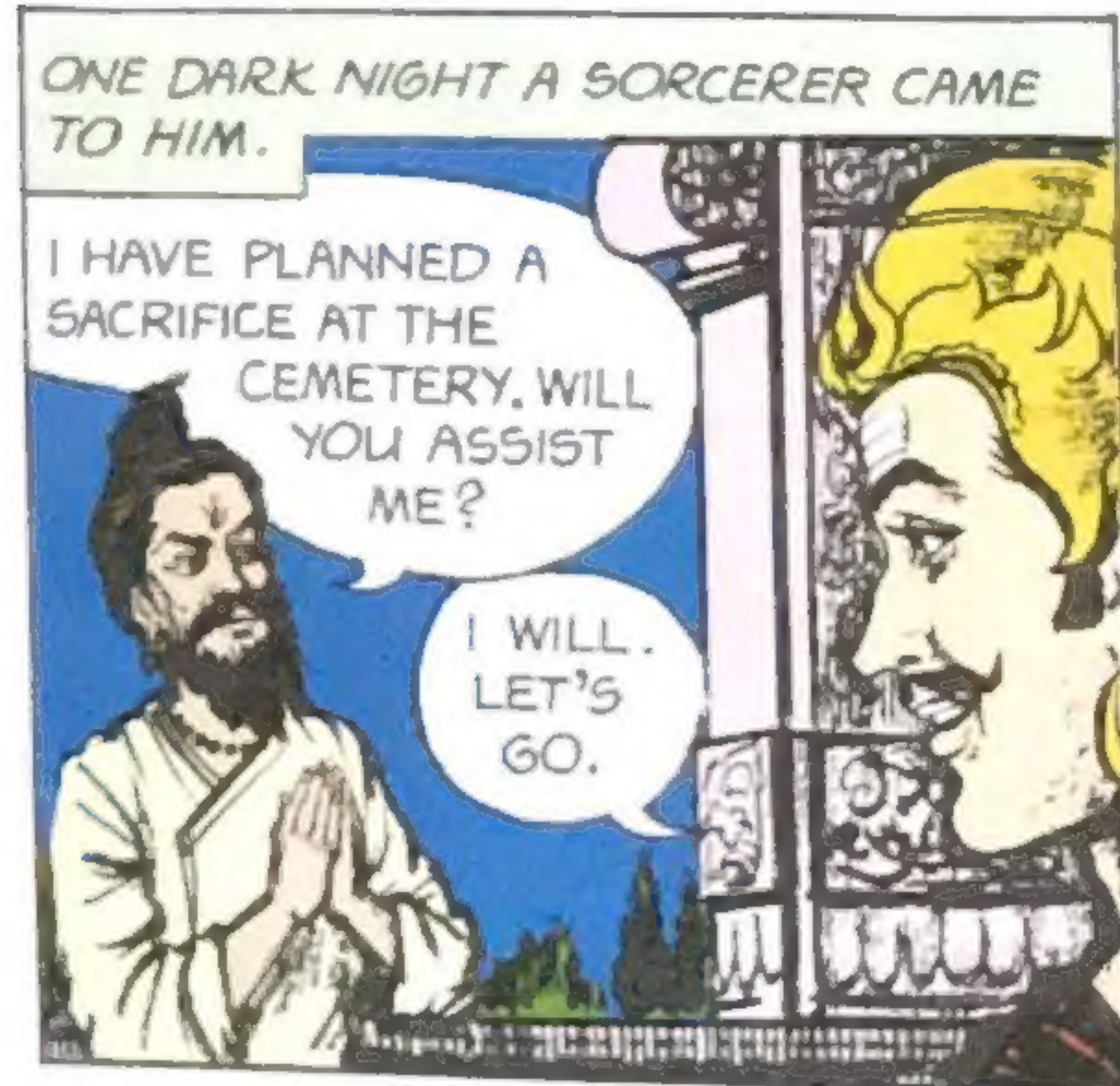
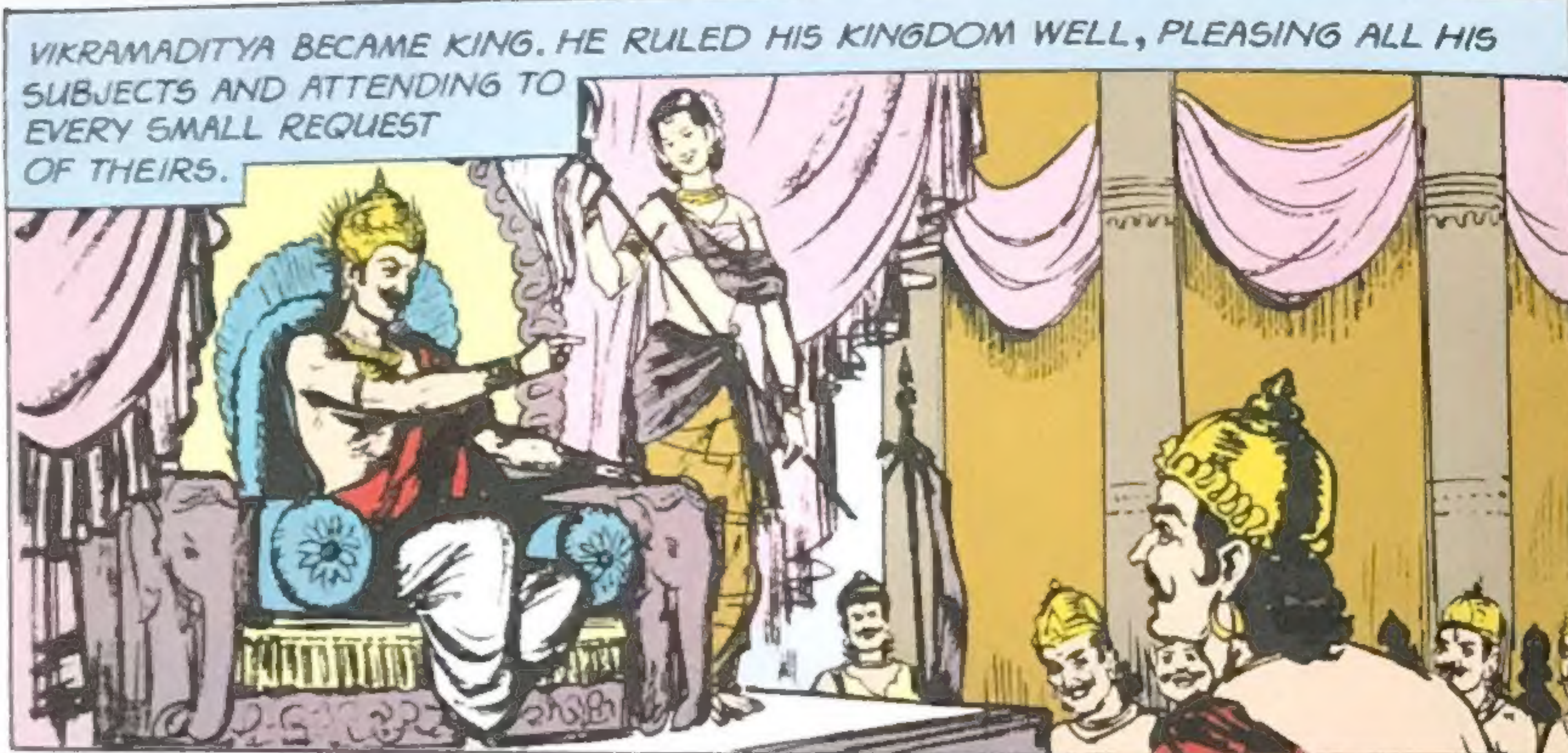
AFTER CONFIRMING THAT IT WAS THE SAME FRUIT, HE SENT FOR ANANGASENA.



HE CALLED HIS BROTHER VIKRAMADITYA TO HIM.

I HAVE DECIDED TO BECOME AN ASCETIC. YOU SHALL REIGN IN MY PLACE.





"THE PRINCE, ENRAGED, STRUCK HIM WITH HIS WHIP. THE BRAHMAN RAN AND COMPLAINED TO THE KING. THE KING WAS ANGRY. HE COMMANDED THAT THE HAND WHICH STRUCK THE BRAHMAN BE CUT OFF."



"HEARING THESE WORDS THE KING FORGAVE THE PRINCE AND THE BRAHMAN RETURNED HOME."



"AS THE ORDER WAS ABOUT TO BE CARRIED OUT THE BRAHMAN RELENDED AND INTERVENED SAYING, 'O KING THE PRINCE ACTED OUT OF IGNORANCE. I AM SURE HE WILL NOT REPEAT THIS CRIME. FOR MY SAKE LET HIM BE PARDONED.'"



TELL ME O KING, OF THE TWO, THE BRAHMAN AND THE KING, WHO WAS MORE VIRTUOUS?

THE KING, OF COURSE!



THE MOMENT VIKRAMADITYA SPOKE, THE VETALA DISAPPEARED FROM HIS SHOULDER AND WAS BACK ON THE TREE.



IN THIS WAY THE VETALA TOLD 24 STORIES AND 24 TIMES VIKRAMADITYA BROKE THE SILENCE AND REPLIED. BUT WHEN THE 25TH STORY WAS TOLD VIKRAMADITYA DID NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO THE GHOUL'S QUESTION AND DID NOT SPEAK A WORD. THE GHOUL WAS FORCED TO STAY

ON HIS SHOULDER AND COULD NOT ESCAPE BACK TO HIS TREE.



THIS KING IS COURAGEOUS, CLEVER AND COMPASSIONATE. I MUST WARN HIM OF THE SORCERER.

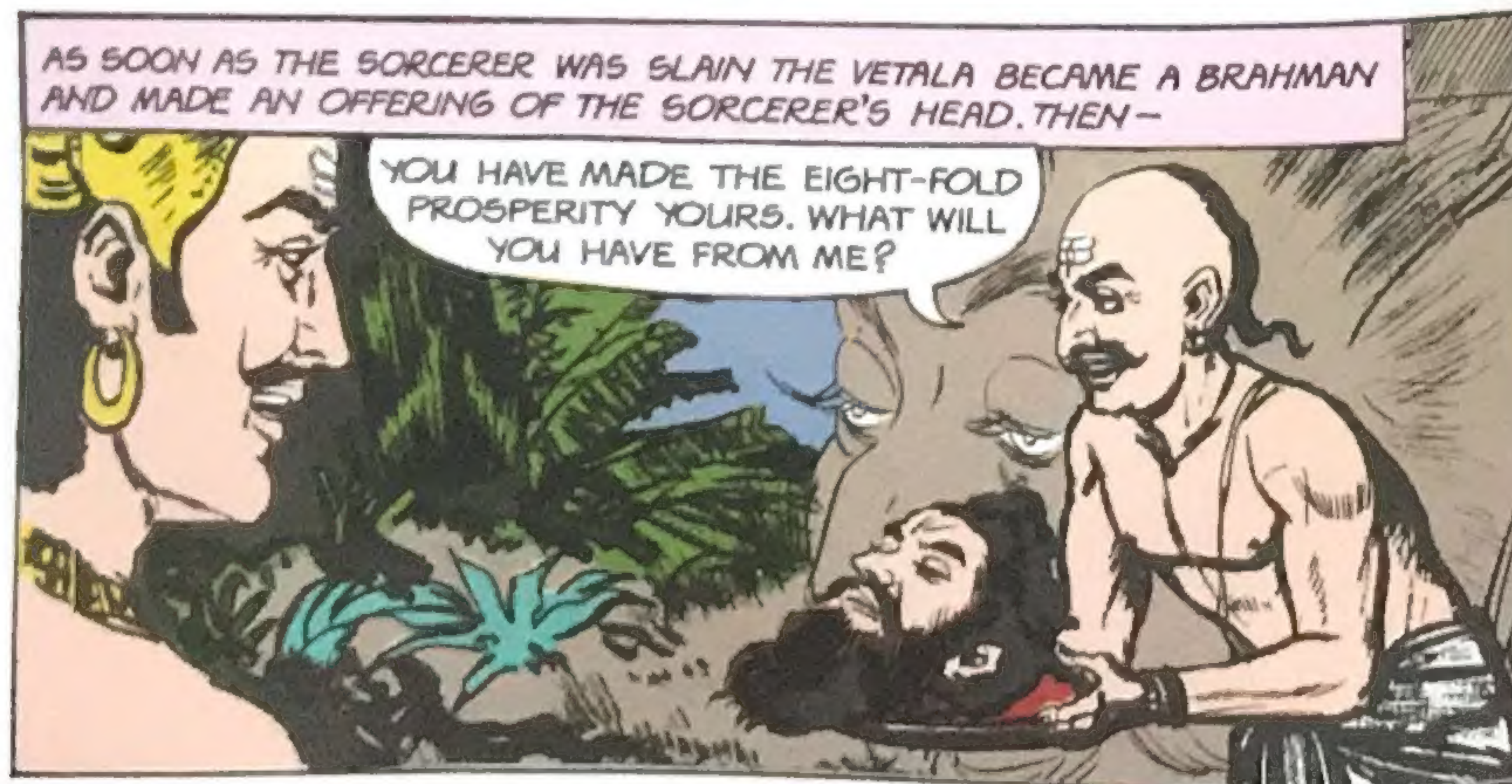
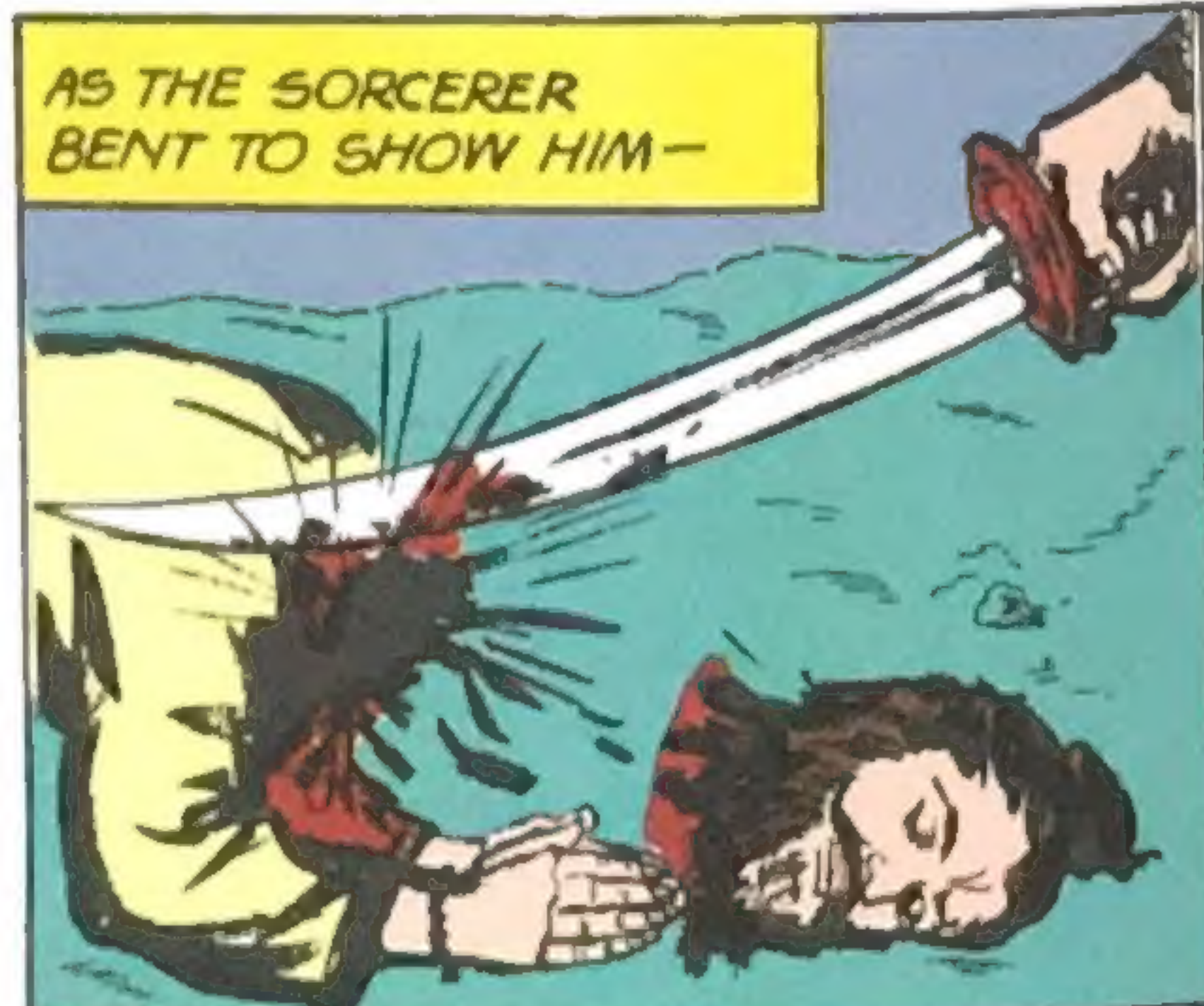
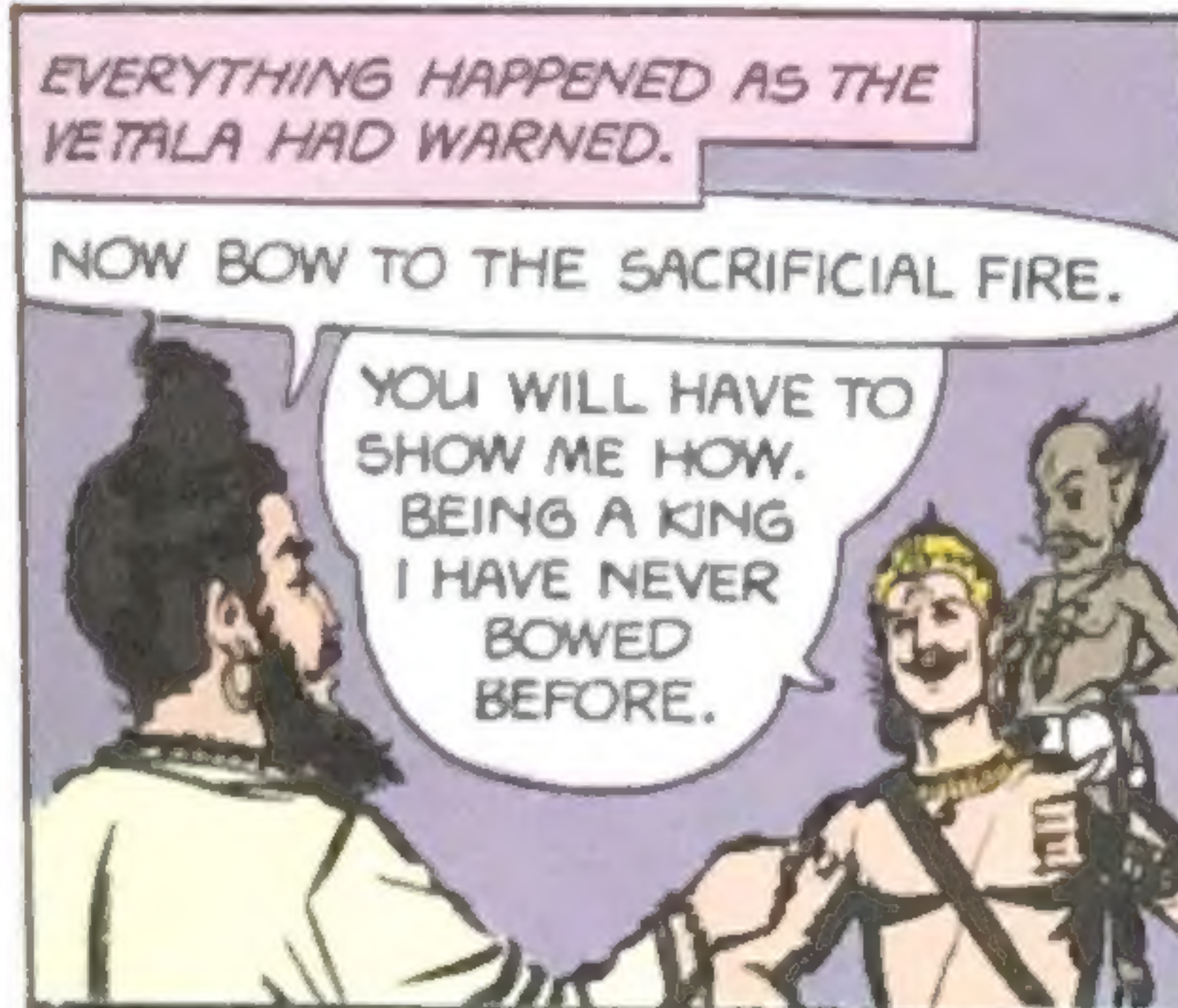
BUT VIKRAMADITYA WENT AFTER HIM AND ONCE AGAIN PLACED HIM ON HIS SHOULDER.

I SHALL TELL YOU ANOTHER STORY. BUT YOU MUST ANSWER MY QUESTION WHEN I FINISH. OR ELSE...



O KING, THE SORCERER INTENDS TO KILL YOU.





THE MAGNANIMOUS VIKRAMADITYA WAS READY WITH HIS REQUEST.



SOON VIKRAMADITYA'S FAME SPREAD FAR AND WIDE AND HIS SUBJECTS LOVED AND RESPECTED HIM.

THERE IS NO KING AS GREAT AS OURS.

WE ARE A FORTUNATE PEOPLE.



IN HEAVEN INDRA WAS WORRIED.

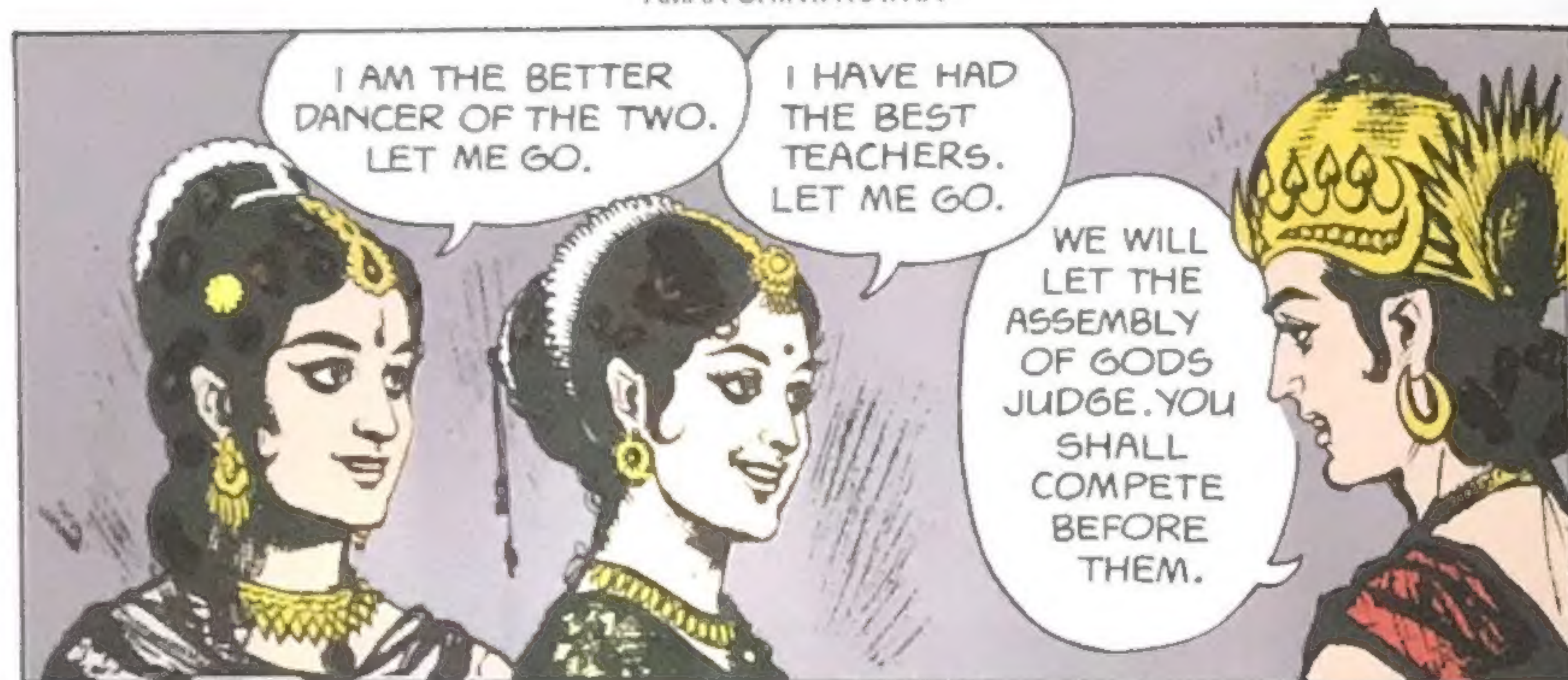
THE AUSTERITIES OF VISHWAMITRA THE SAGE ARE BECOMING INTENSE. THEY WILL SOON BURN UP THE THREE WORLDS.



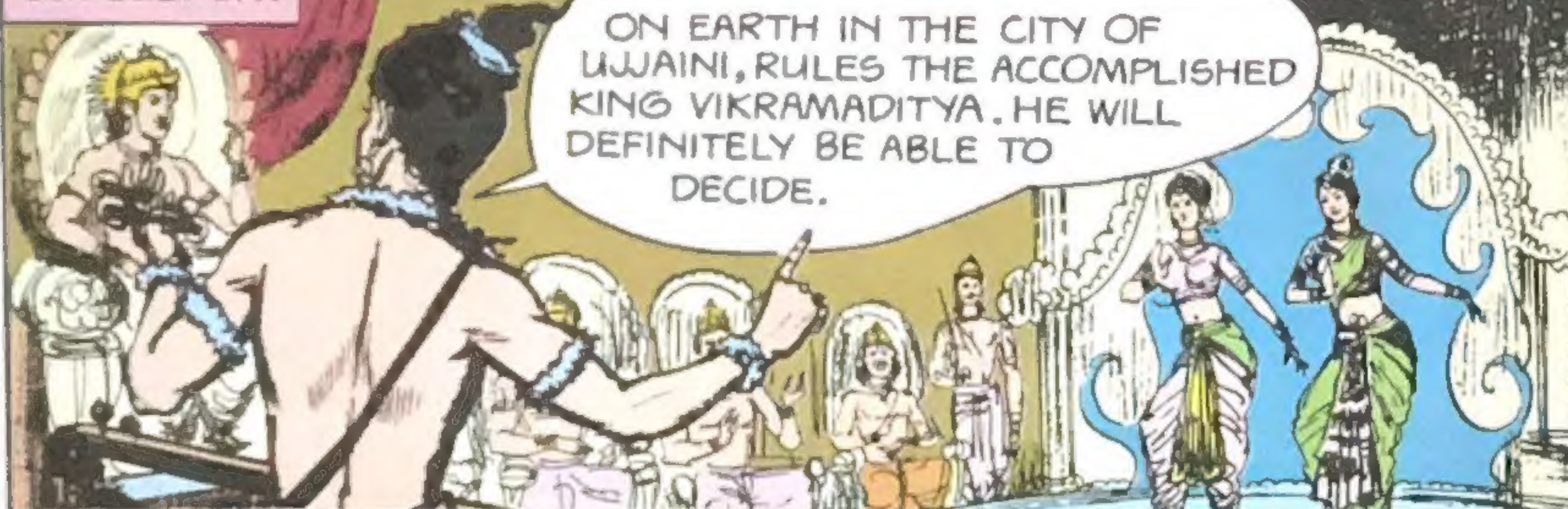
HE SENT FOR RAMBHA AND URVASHI, TWO OF THE BEST APSARA DANCERS OF HIS COURT.

THE MORE SKILFUL OF YOU TWO MUST GO TO VISHWAMITRA'S GROVE AND DISTURB HIS PENANCE. YOU WILL BE WELL REWARDED IF YOU SUCCEED.



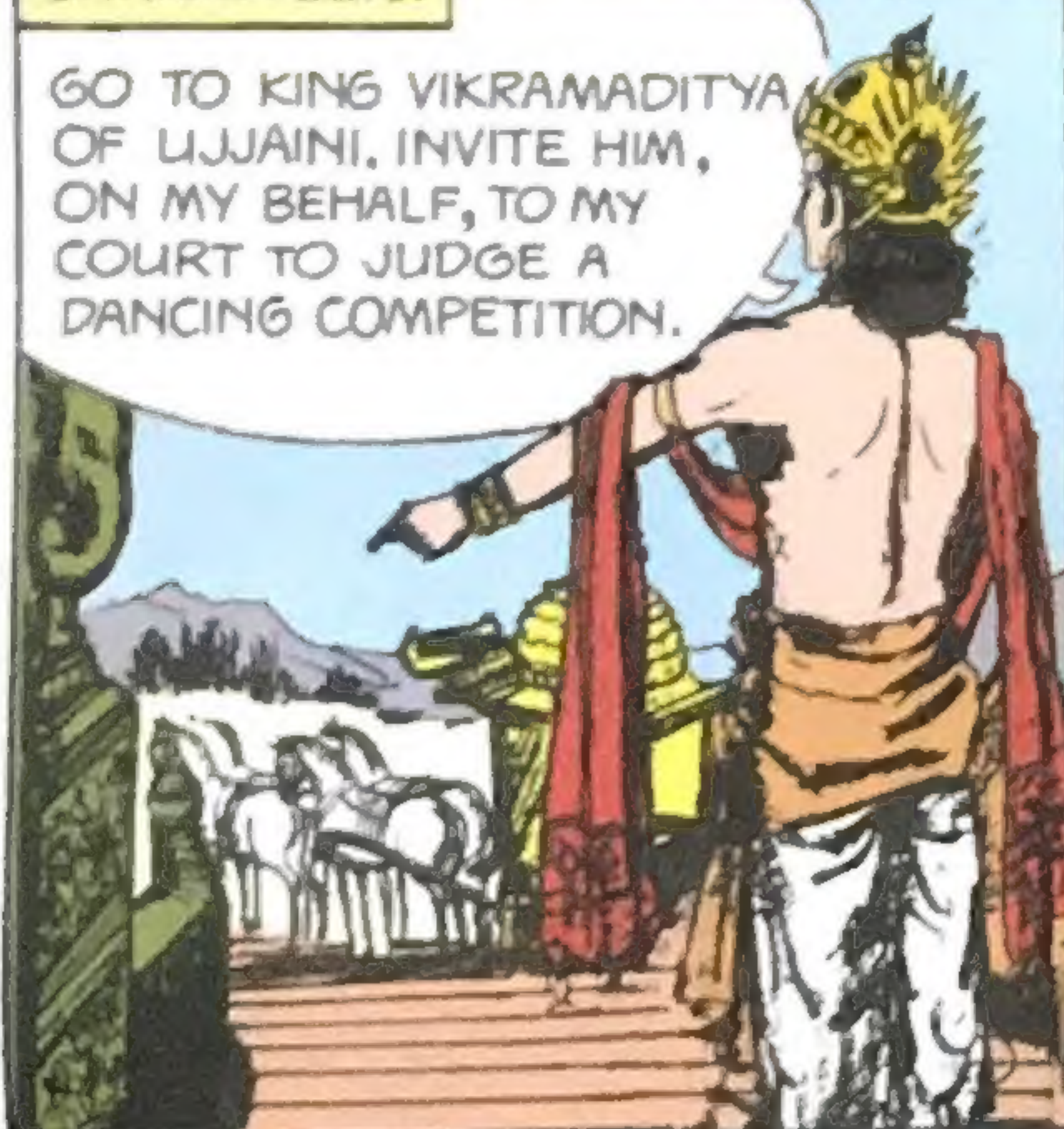


THE GODS WERE SO DELIGHTED WITH THE DANCING OF BOTH THAT THEY COULD NOT MAKE UP THEIR MINDS. THE SAGE NARADA AT LAST MADE A SUGGESTION.



INDRA SENT FOR MATALI HIS CHARIOTEER.

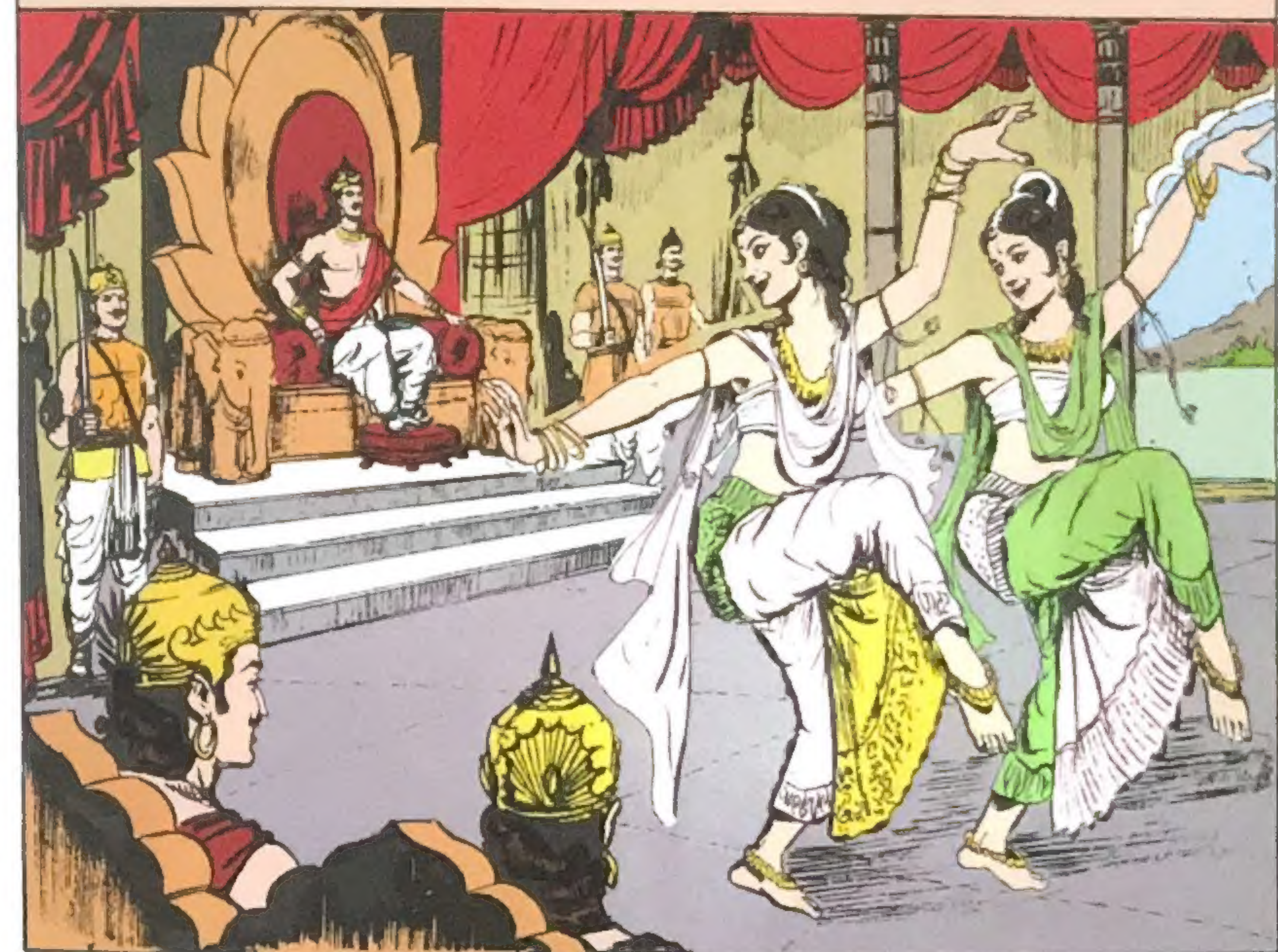
GO TO KING VIKRAMADITYA OF UJJAINI, INVITE HIM, ON MY BEHALF, TO MY COURT TO JUDGE A DANCING COMPETITION.



VIKRAMADITYA, A LOVER OF THE ARTS, NATURALLY ACCEPTED THE INVITATION. HE RETURNED WITH MATALI IN HIS CHARIOT.



THE GREAT DAY DAWNED AND BOTH ARTISTES GAVE OF THEIR BEST.



WHEN IT WAS OVER-

URVASHI, WITHOUT A DOUBT, IS THE BETTER DANCER.



VIKRAMADITYA EXPLAINED AND INDRA WAS PLEASED BY HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUBJECT.

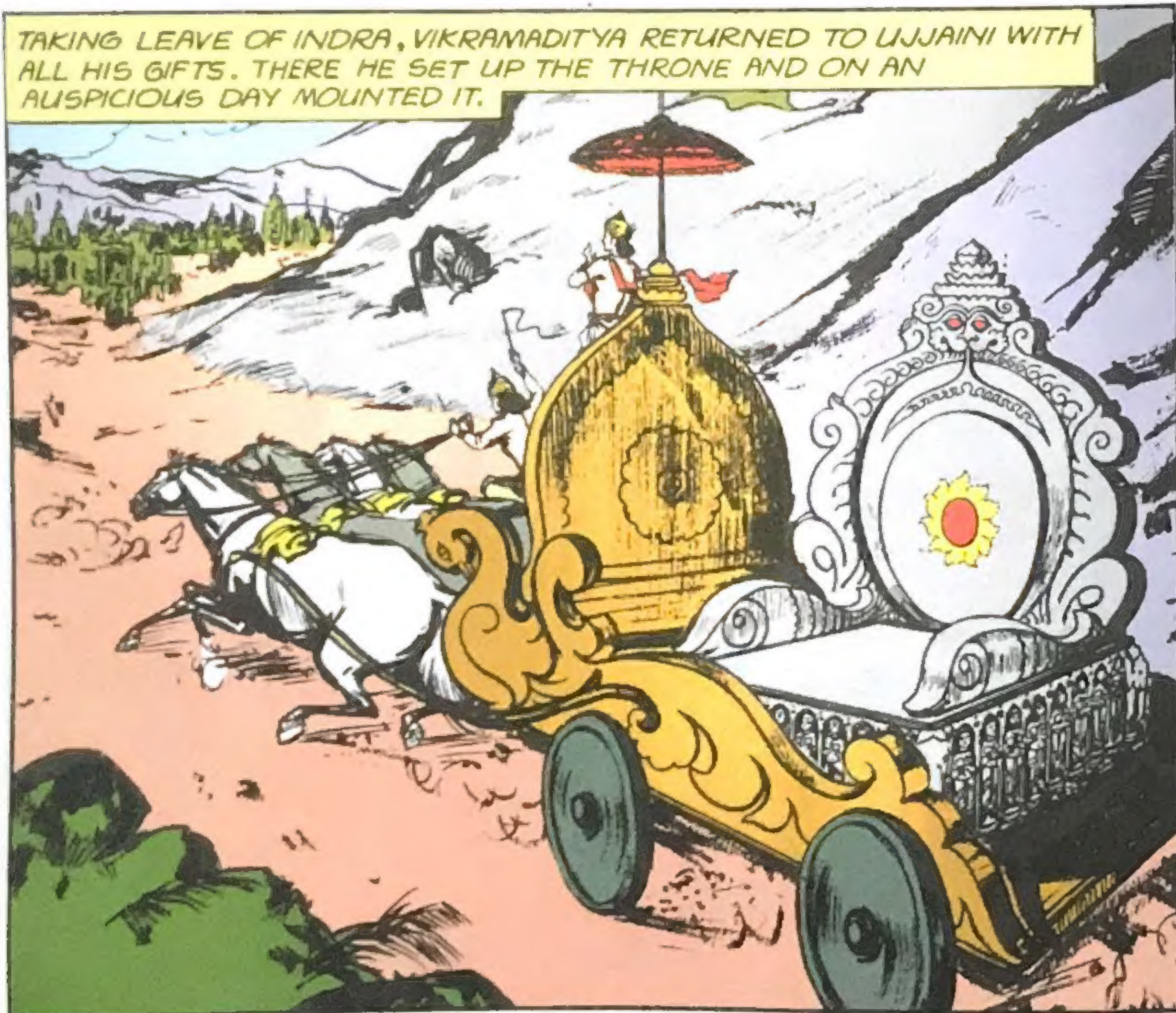


INDRA GAVE PRESENTS TO VIKRAMADITYA. AMONG THEM WAS SHIVA'S THRONE.

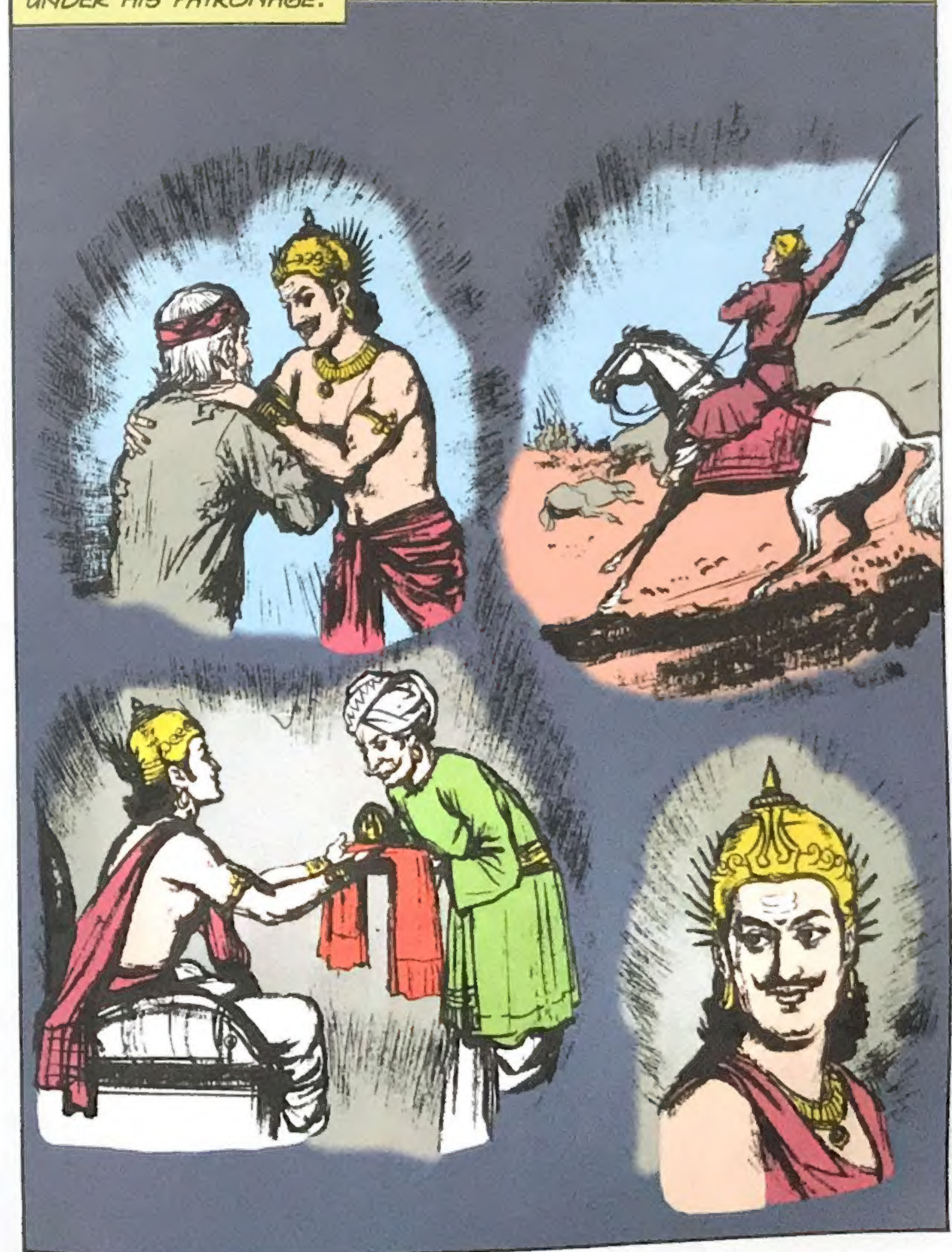


THIS THRONE TOO IS YOURS, GREAT KING. IT WAS GIVEN TO ME BY LORD SHIVA.

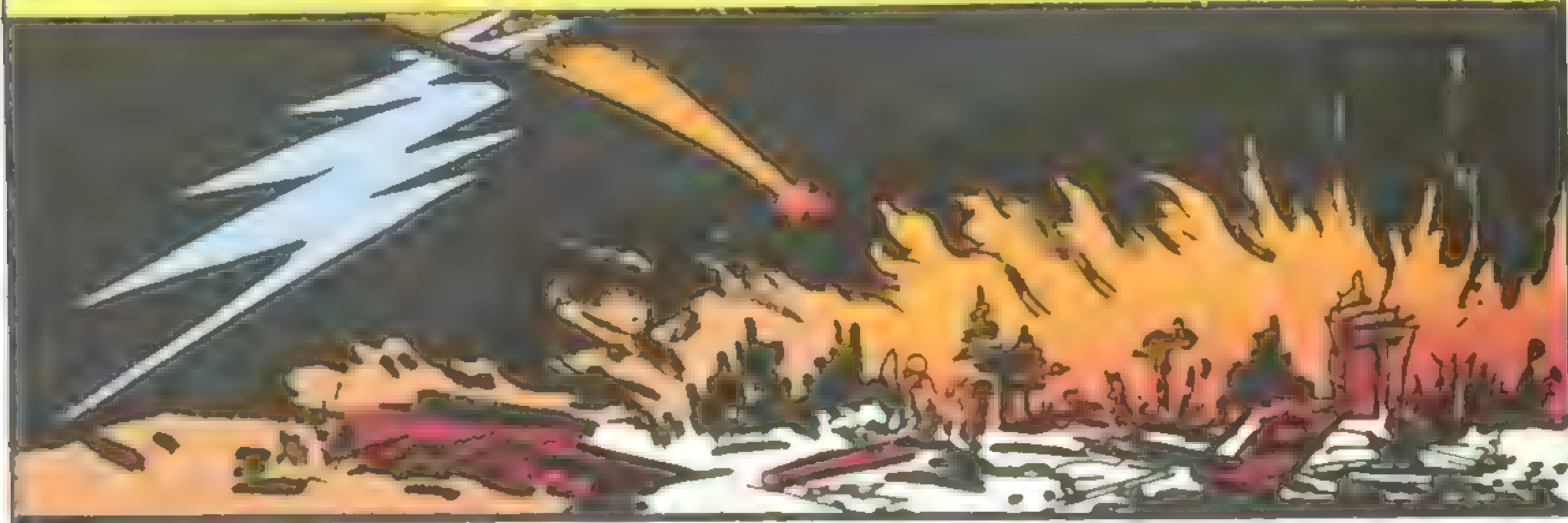
TAKING LEAVE OF INDRA, VIKRAMADITYA RETURNED TO UJJAINI WITH ALL HIS GIFTS. THERE HE SET UP THE THRONE AND ON AN AUSPICIOUS DAY MOUNTED IT.



FROM THE DAY HE MOUNTED THE THRONE, HIS RULE WAS GLORIOUS IN EVERY WAY. HE WAS THE OVERLORD OF ALL THE KINGS ON EARTH. HE VANQUISHED ALL EVIL MEN. POVERTY WAS UNKNOWN AND FAMINE AND GRIEF UNHEARD OF. SAVANTS AND SCHOLARS PROSPERED UNDER HIS PATRONAGE.



THEN SUDDENLY, DAY AFTER DAY, A NUMBER OF EVIL OMENS STRUCK UJJAINI.



VIKRAMADITYA SENT FOR THE COURT ASTROLOGERS.



WHAT DO THESE OMENS MEAN?

THEY FOREBODE ILL, O KING. YOUR LIFE IS IN DANGER.

ONLY THEN DID VIKRAMADITYA REMEMBER AN INCIDENT WHICH HAD OCCURRED YEARS AGO. HE HAD PLEASSED SHIVA WITH HIS PENANCE. SO—



O KING, ASK FOR ANY BOON.

LET MY DEATH BE AT THE HANDS OF NONE BUT THE SON OF A TWO-AND-A-HALF-YEAR-OLD GIRL.

SO BE IT.

HE TOLD THE ASTROLOGER ABOUT IT.

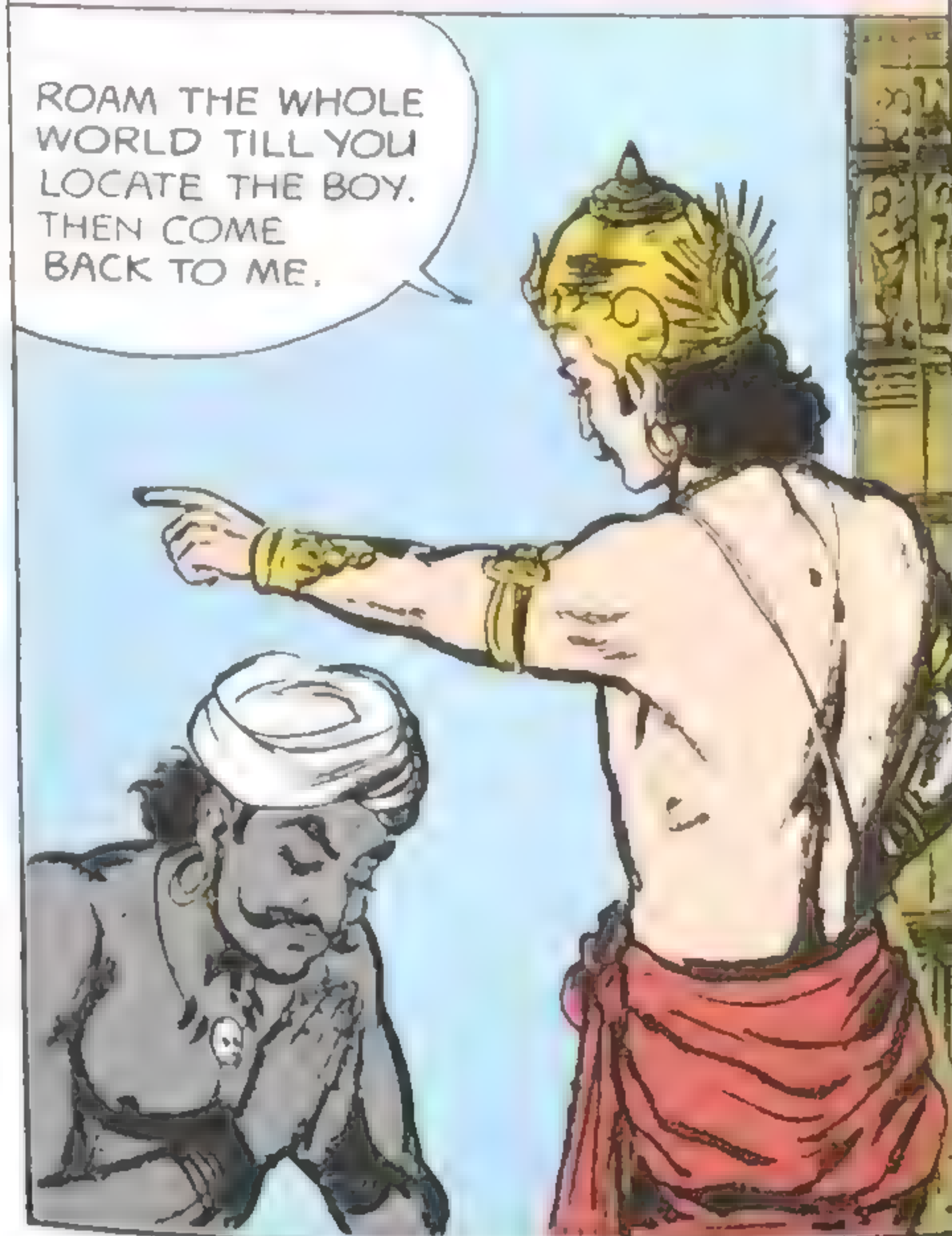


I THOUGHT THIS BOON WOULD MAKE ME IMMORTAL. FOR IT IS IMPOSSIBLE THAT A TWO-AND-A-HALF-YEAR-OLD GIRL COULD EVER BEAR A SON.

THE WAYS OF DESTINY ARE MYSTERIOUS. THE OMENS BESPEAK THE BIRTH OF YOUR FOE.

VIKRAMADITYA IMMEDIATELY SUMMONED THE VETALA AND TOLD HIM ALL.

ROAM THE WHOLE WORLD TILL YOU LOCATE THE BOY. THEN COME BACK TO ME.

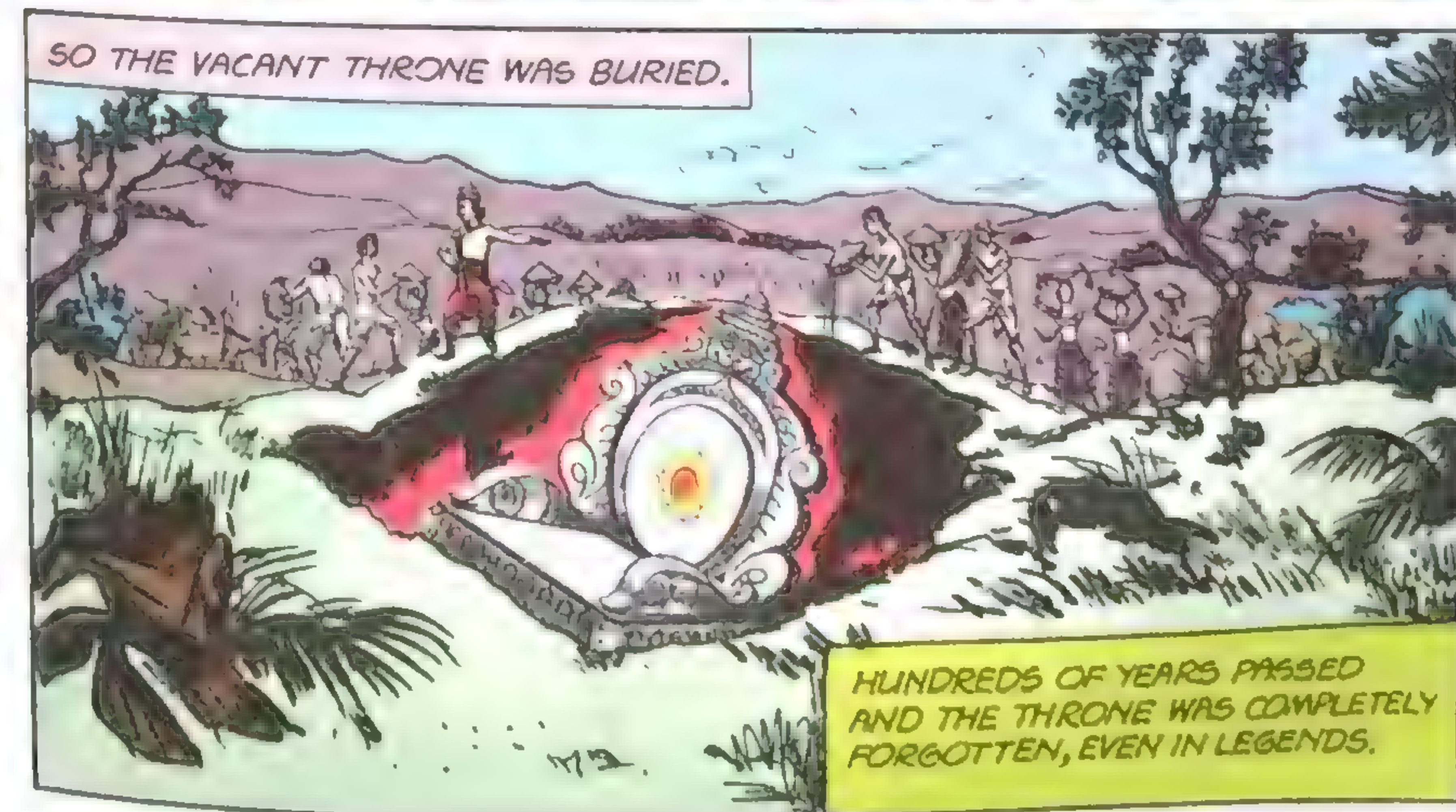
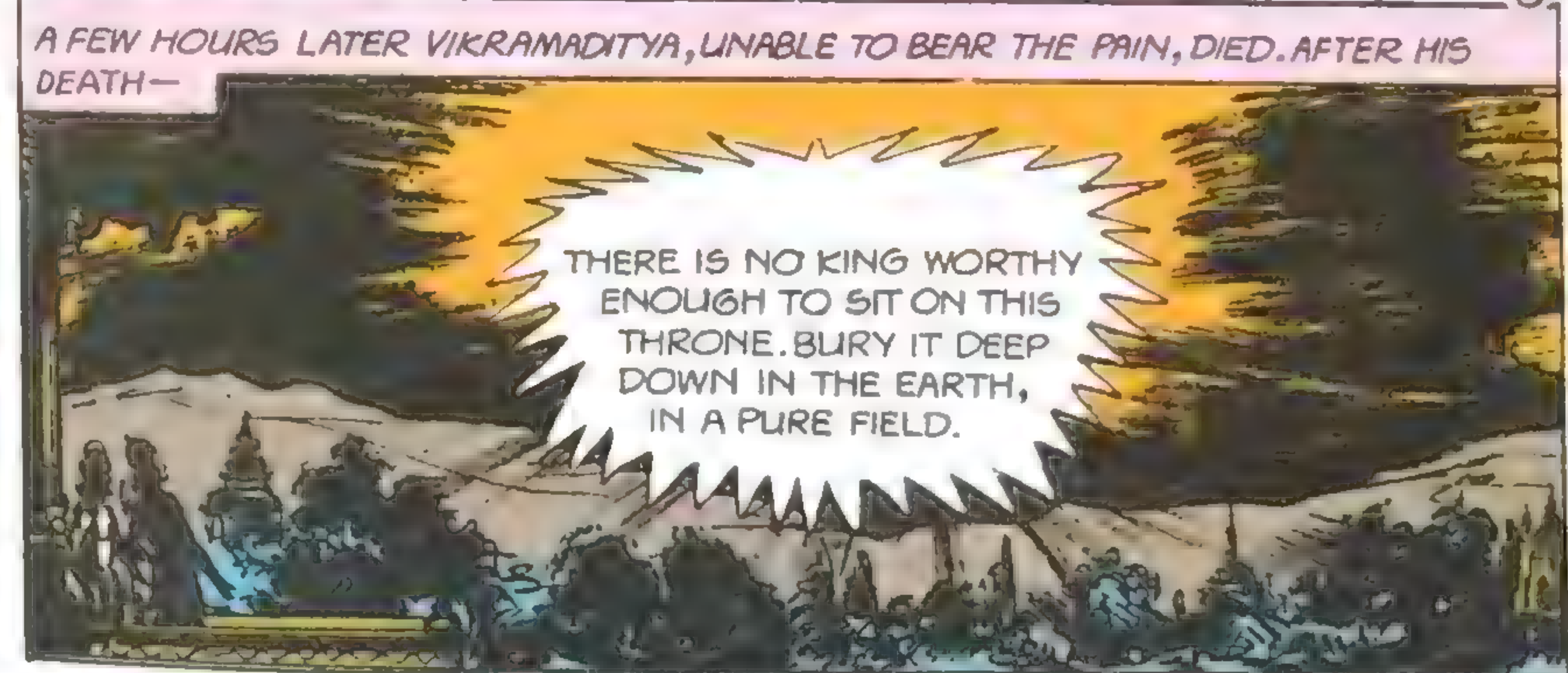
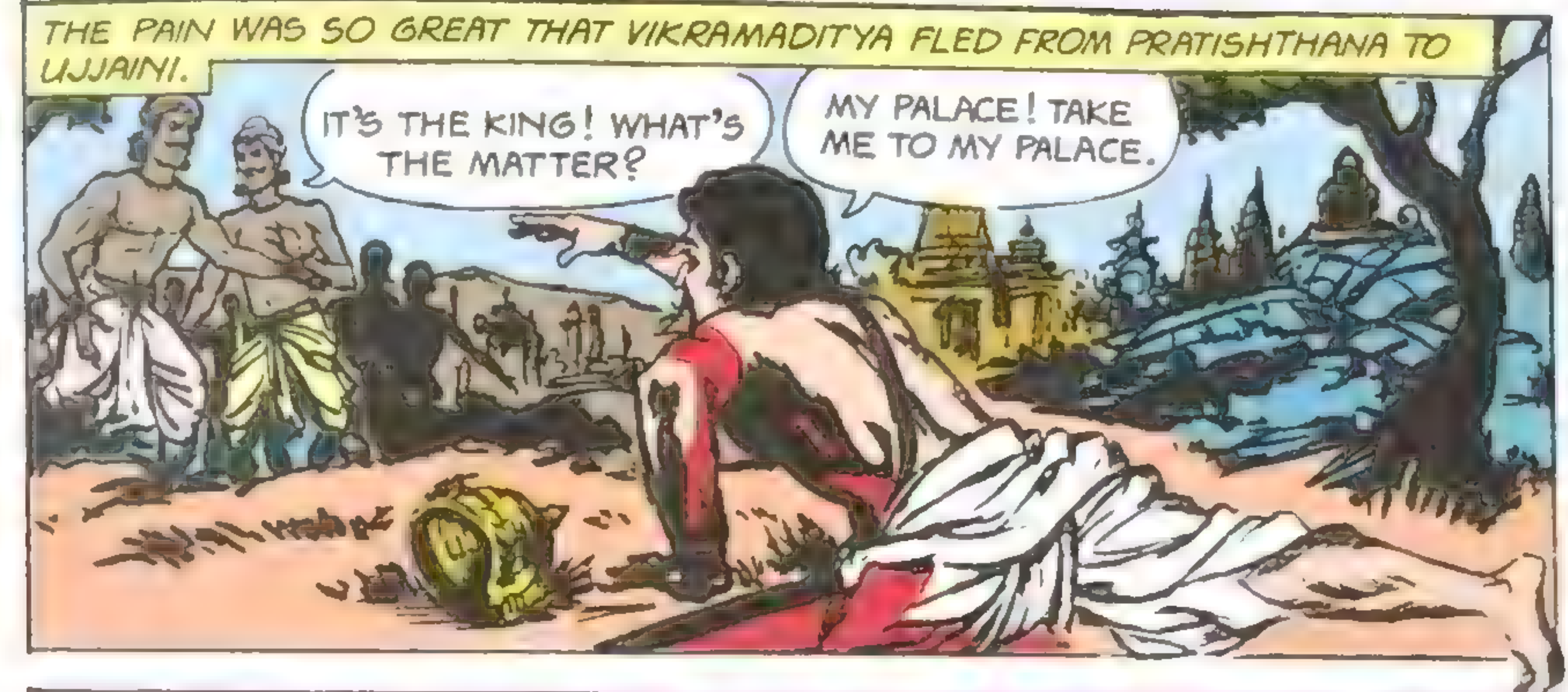
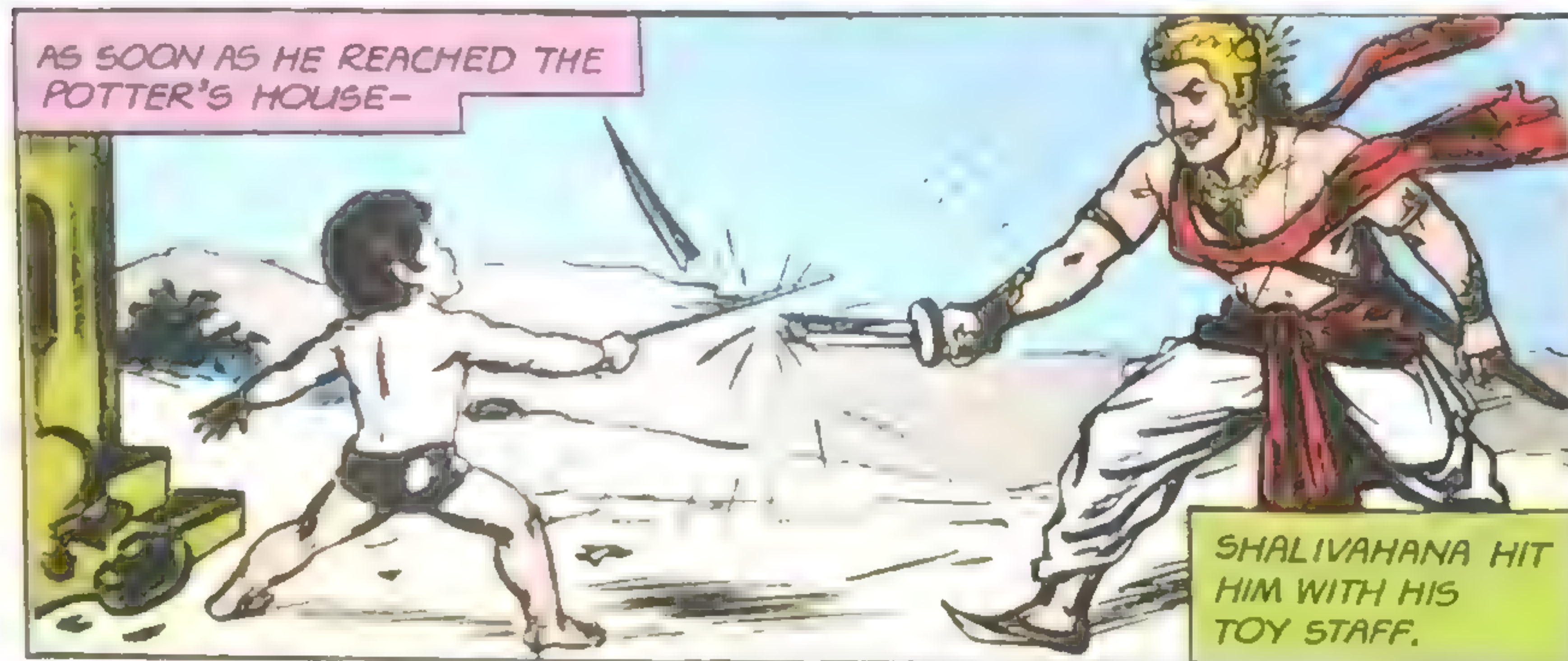
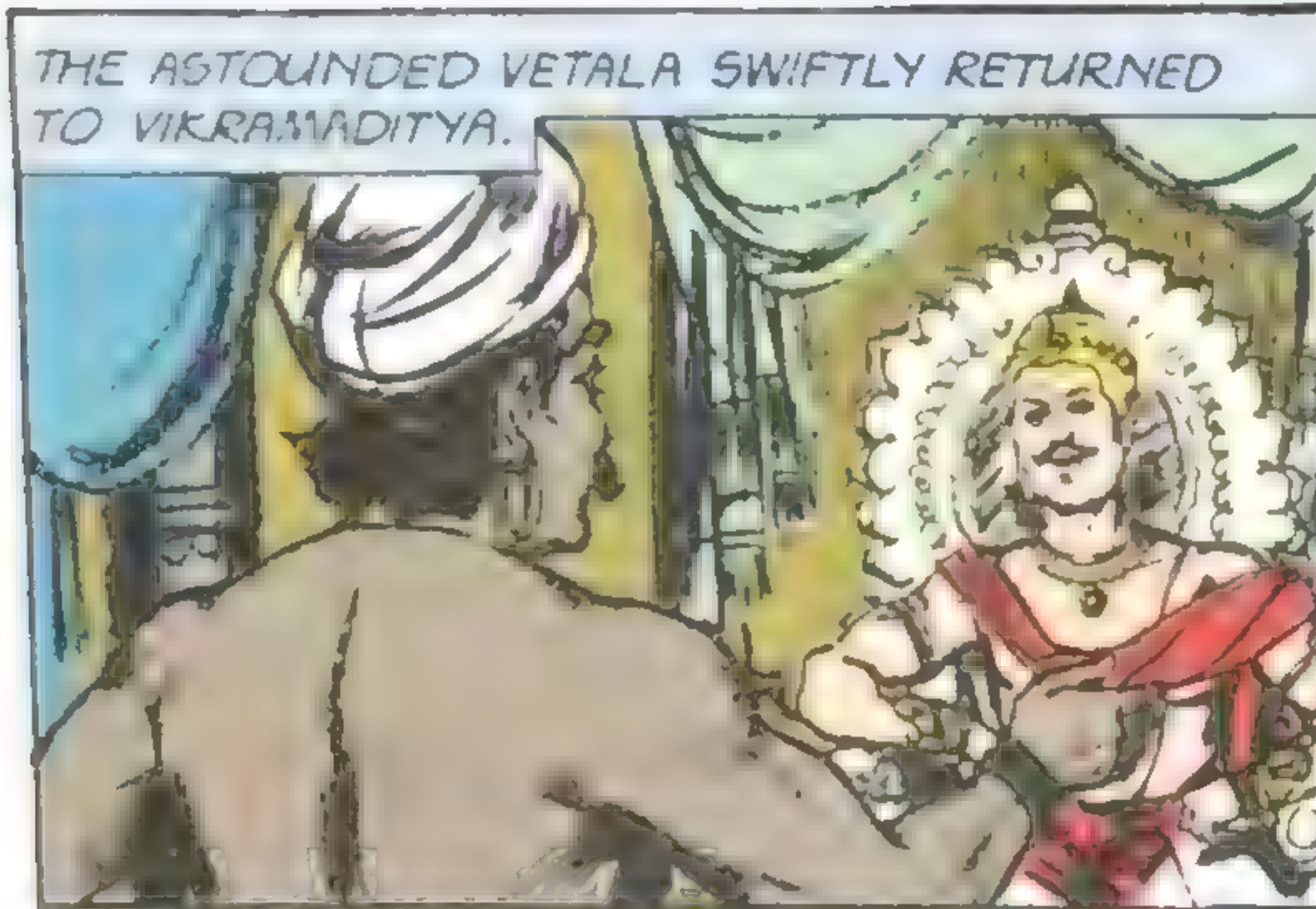


THE VETALA DID AS HE WAS TOLD. AT LAST HE CAME TO PRATISHTHANA TO THE HOUSE OF A POTTER.

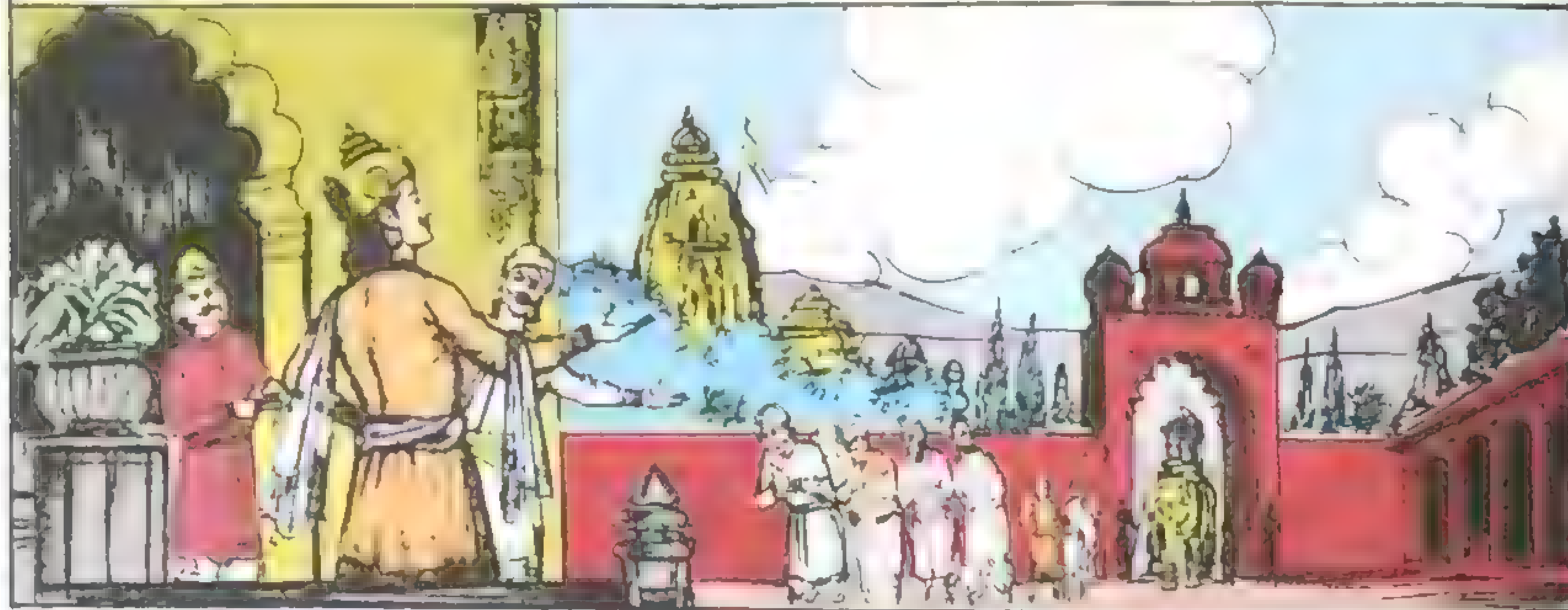


PRAY WHO IS THIS LITTLE BOY?

MY SON, SHALIVAHANA.



THE CITY OF DHARA REPLACED UJAINI AS THE CAPITAL CITY. IT WAS RULED BY RAJA BHOJA, A JUST, CAPABLE AND BELOVED KING.



VERY NEAR DHARA WAS A FIELD, WHICH BELONGED TO A BRAHMAN.



HE BEGAN LOOKING FOR A GOOD VANTAGE POINT.



ONE DAY, RAJA BHOJA, OUT ON A HUNTING EXPEDITION, PASSED BY THE FIELD.



THE THIRSTY MEN WERE ONLY WAITING FOR THE INVITATION.

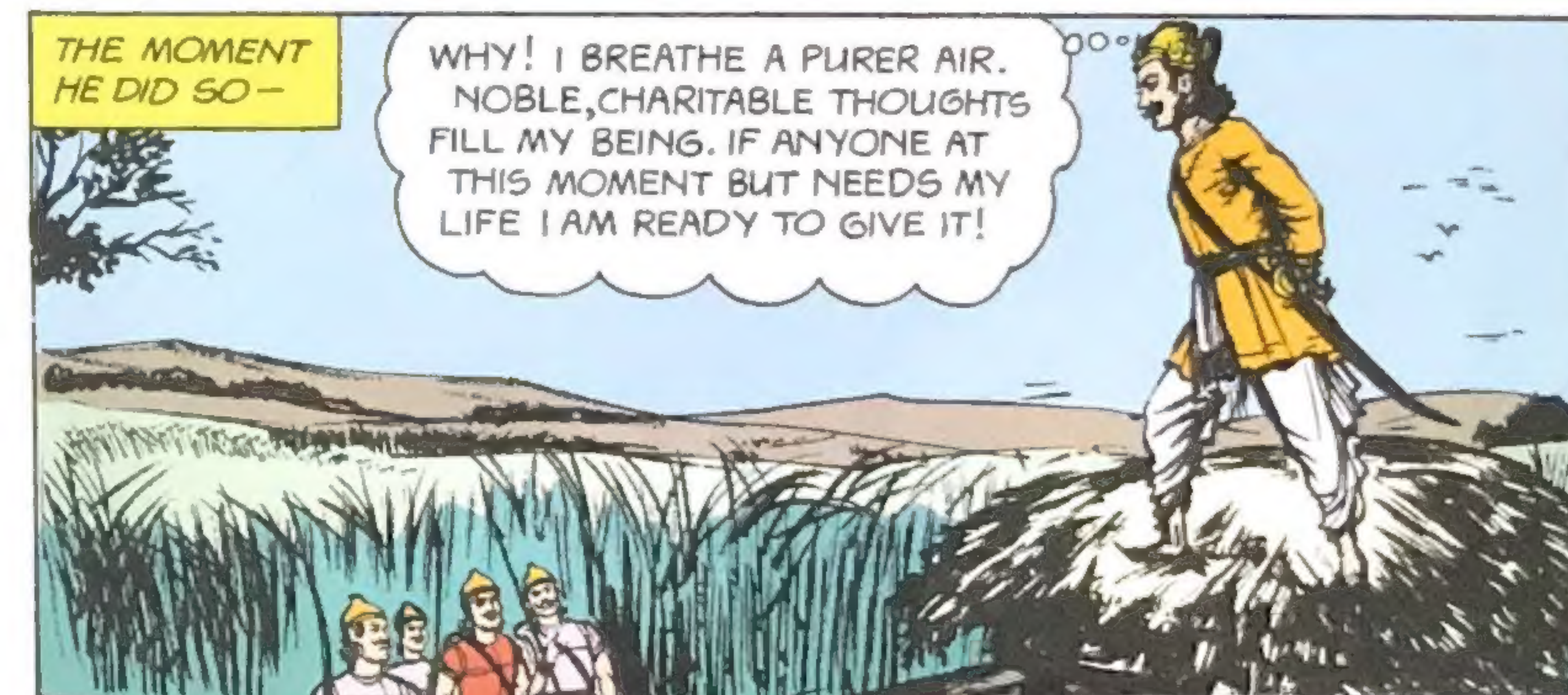
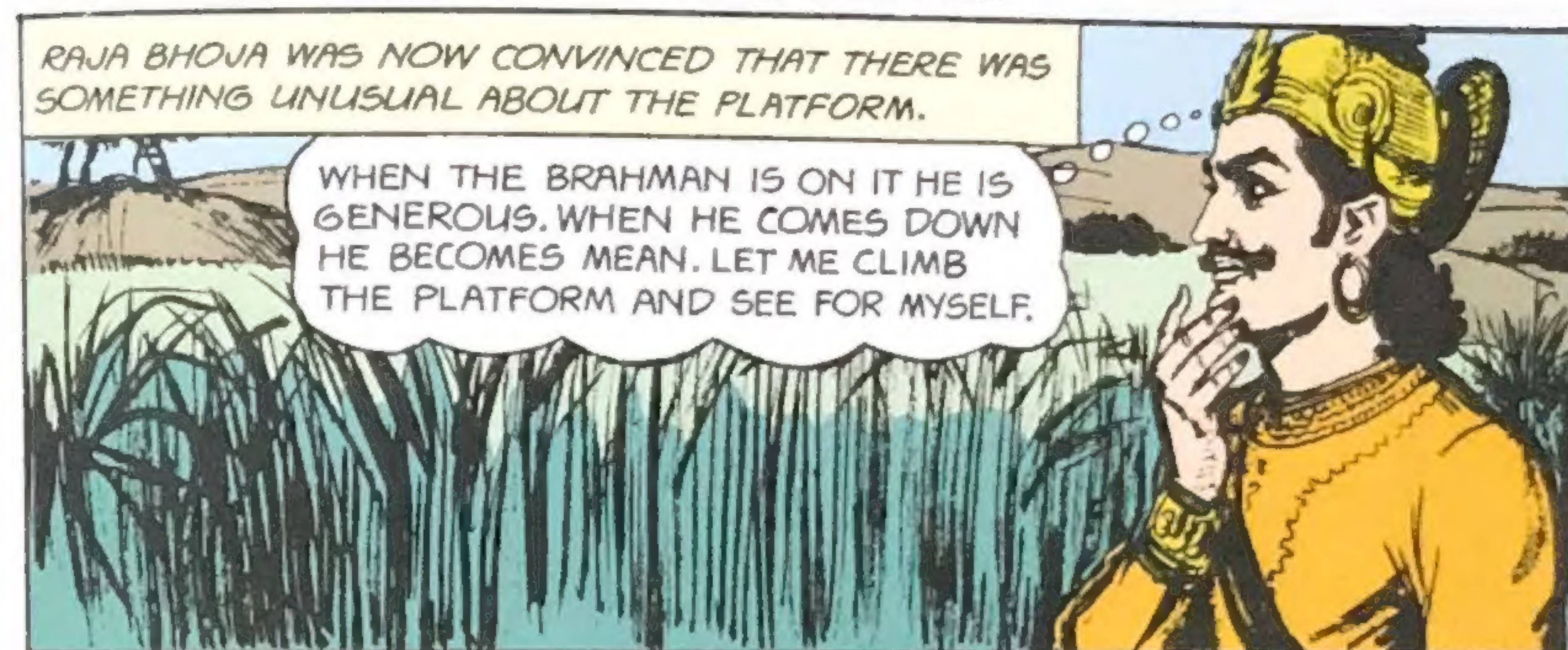
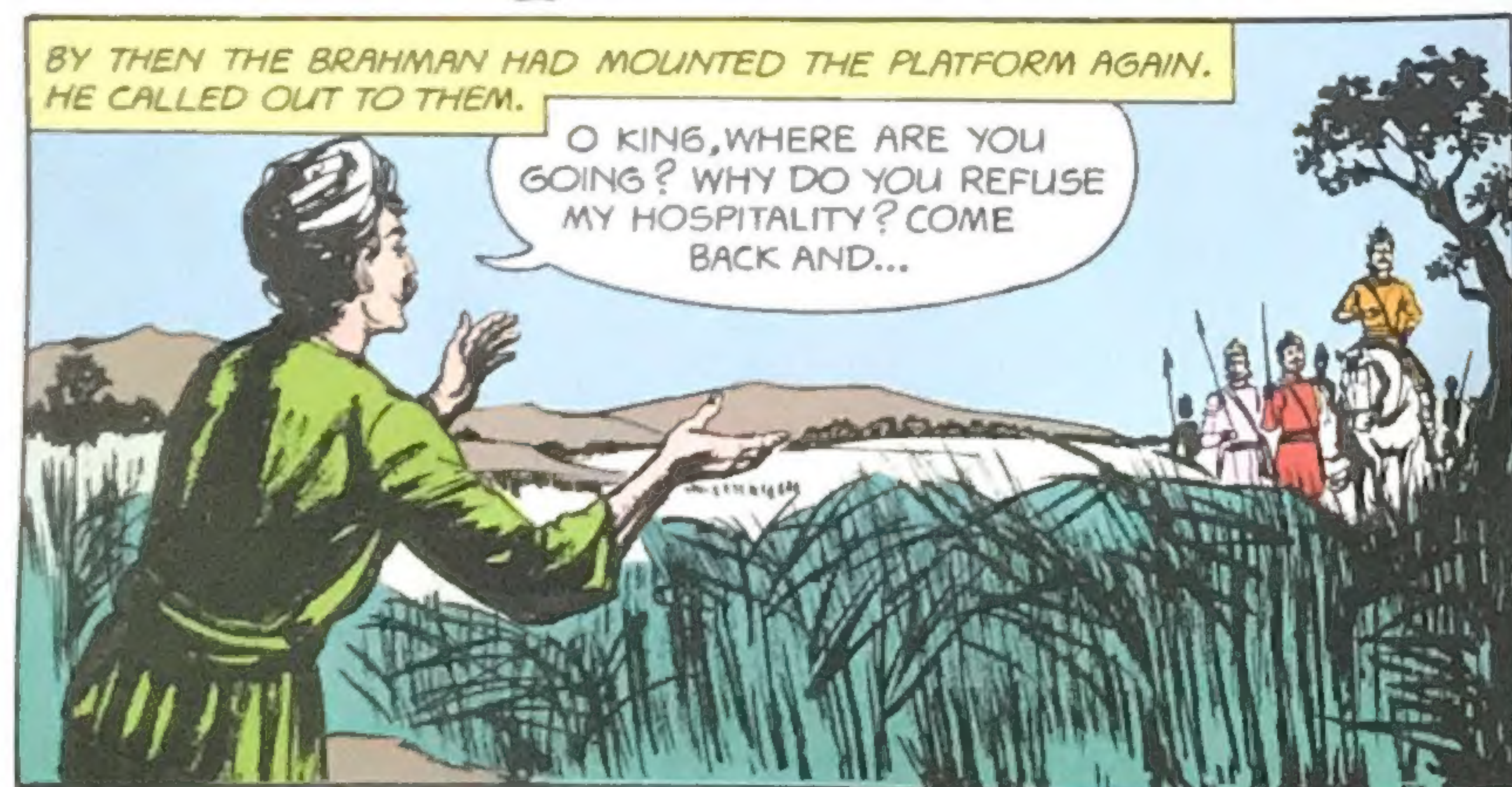
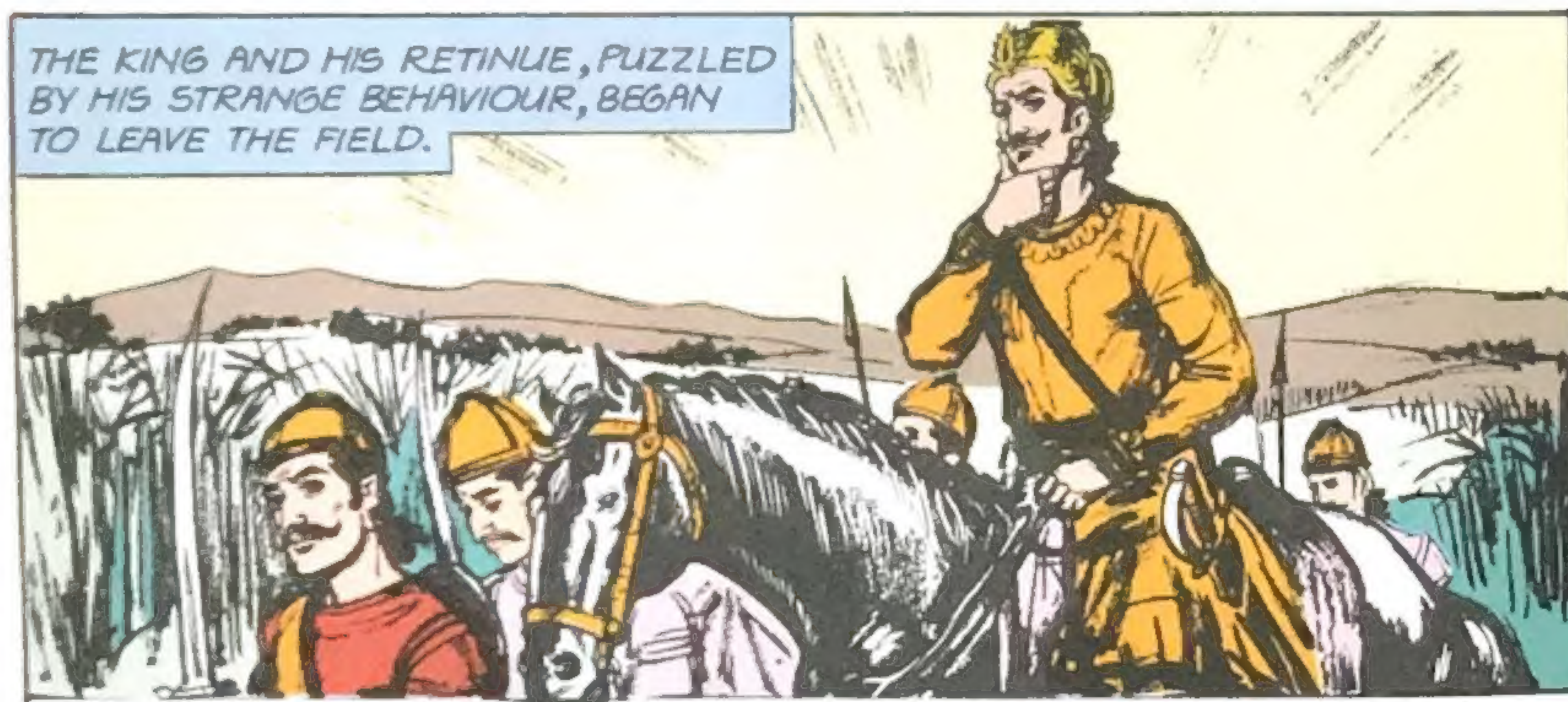


THE BRAHMAN WHO WAS WATCHING THEM FROM THE PLATFORM HEARD THEM.



JUST THEN THE BRAHMAN CAME DOWN TO SHOO AWAY SOME CROWS.





RAJA BHOJA GAVE THE BRAHMAN MONEY, GRAINS AND OTHER RICHES AND SENT HIM AWAY HAPPY.

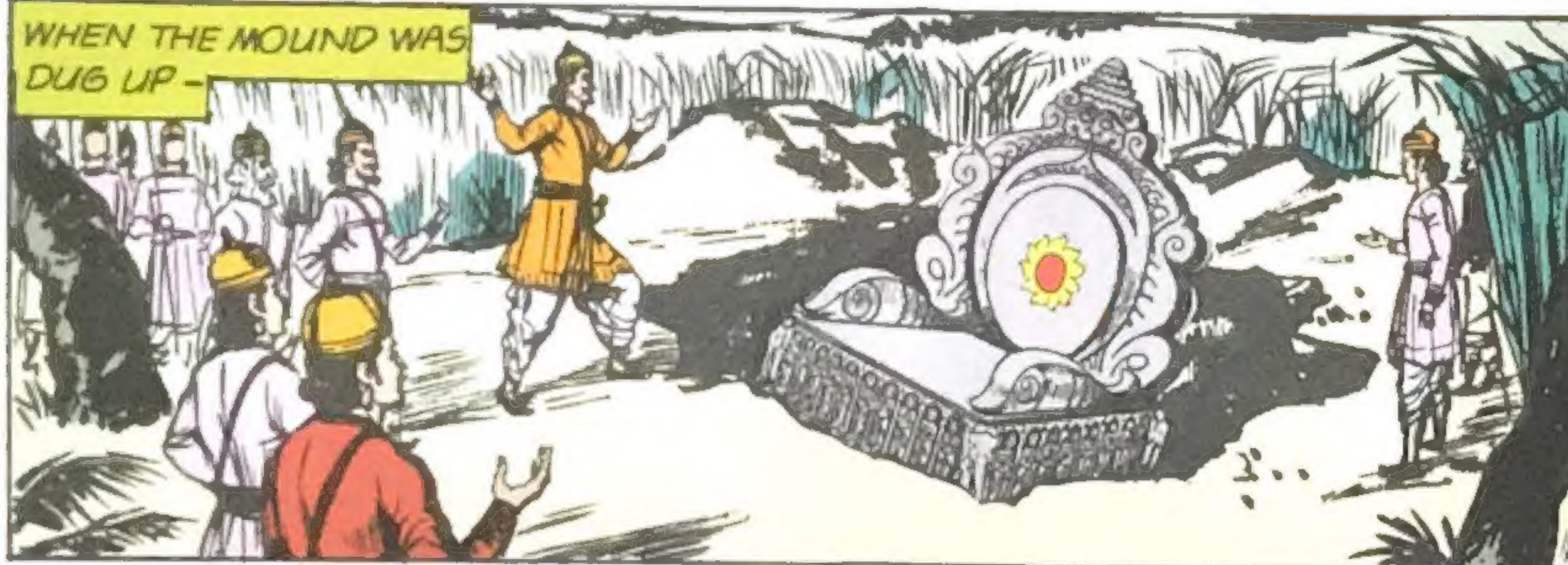


THEN HE SUMMONED HIS MEN TO HIM.

HAVE THE MOUND BELOW THE PLATFORM DUG UP.



WHEN THE MOUND WAS DUG UP -



BUT WHEN THEY TRIED TO REMOVE THE THRONE, TRY AS THEY MIGHT THEY COULD NOT SHIFT IT AN INCH.

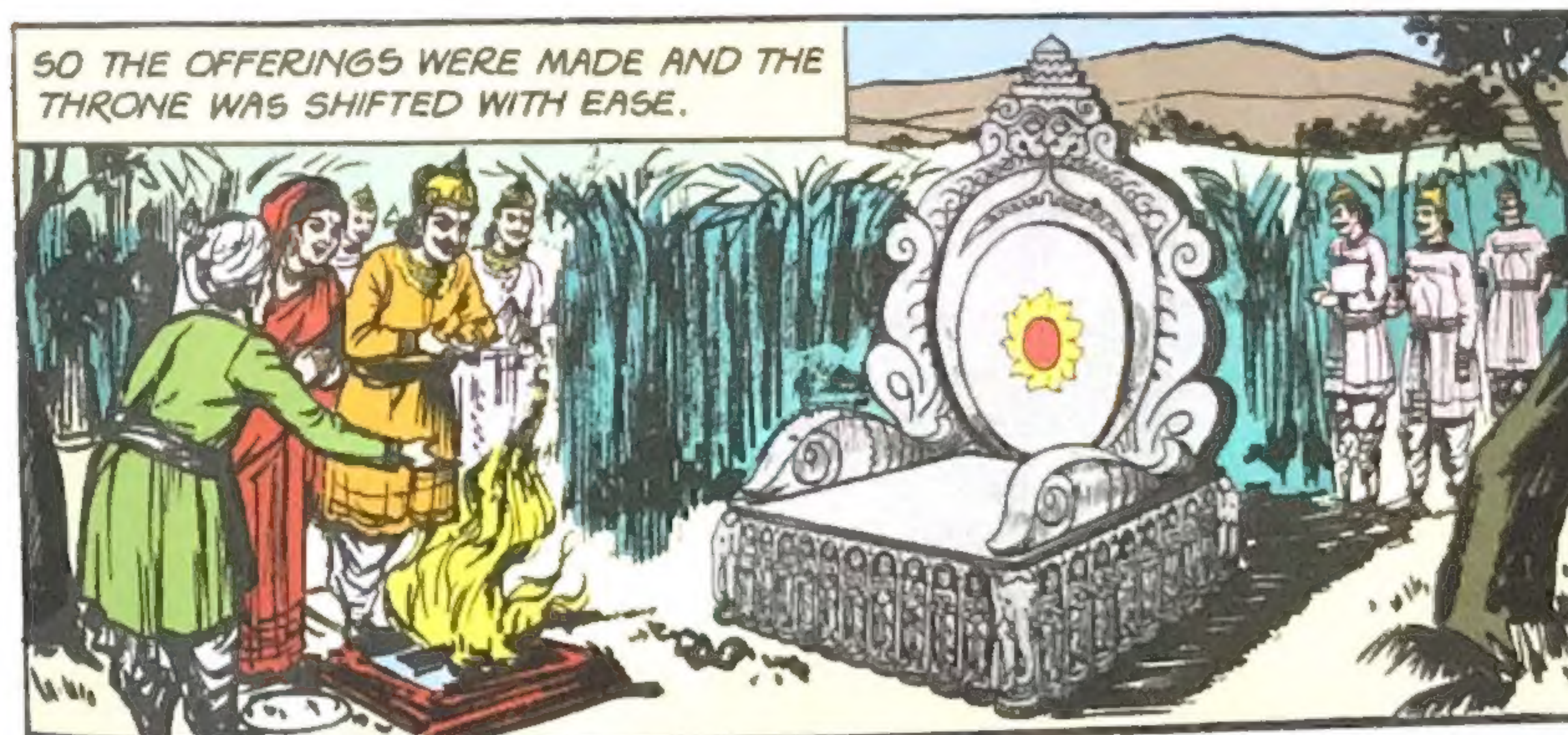


RAJA BHOJA CONSULTED HIS MINISTER.

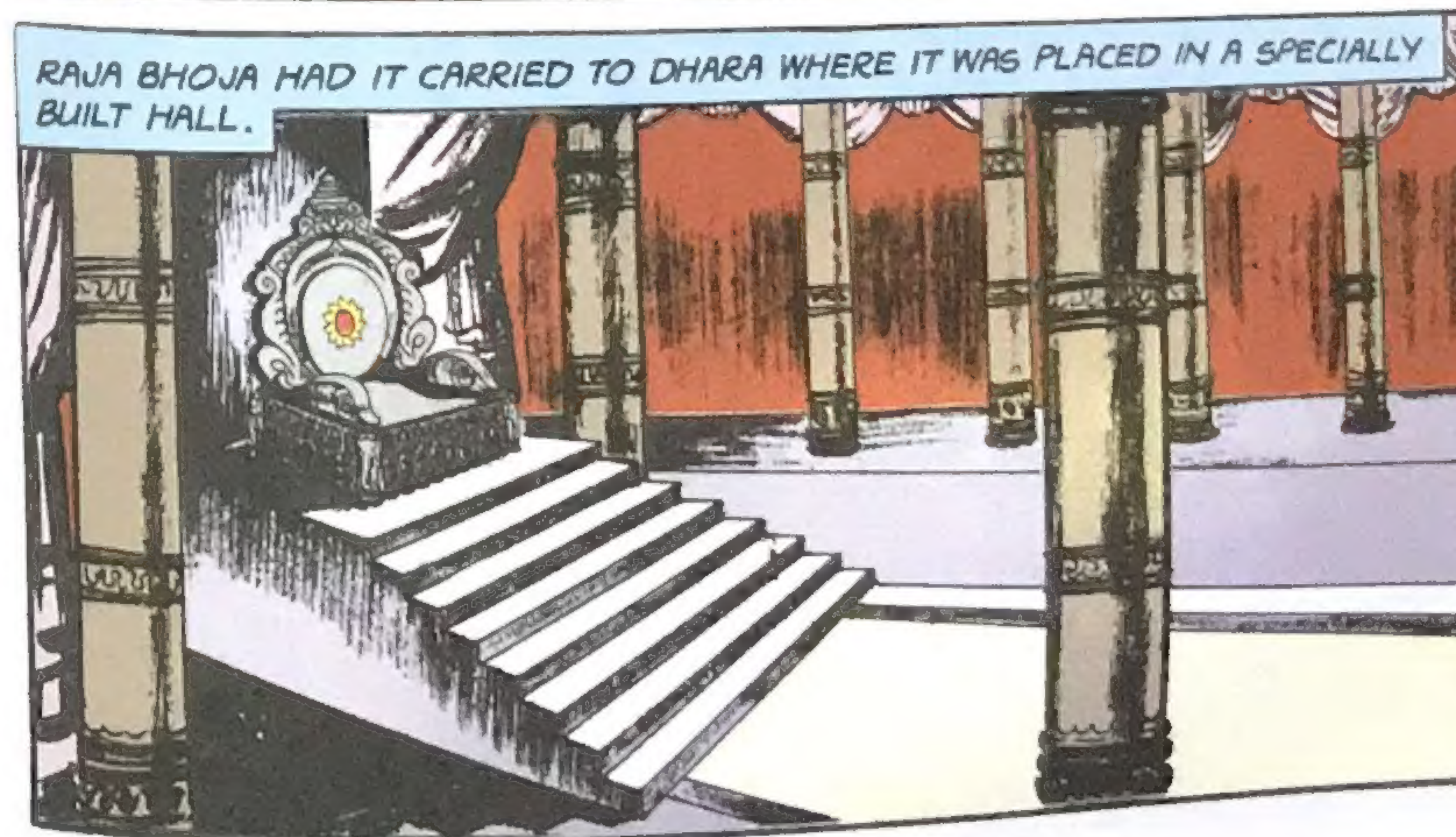


THIS MUST BE A DIVINE THRONE. IT WILL HAVE TO BE HONOURED WITH SACRED RITUALS IF IT IS TO BE MOVED AND IF IT IS NOT TO BRING YOU ILL-LUCK.

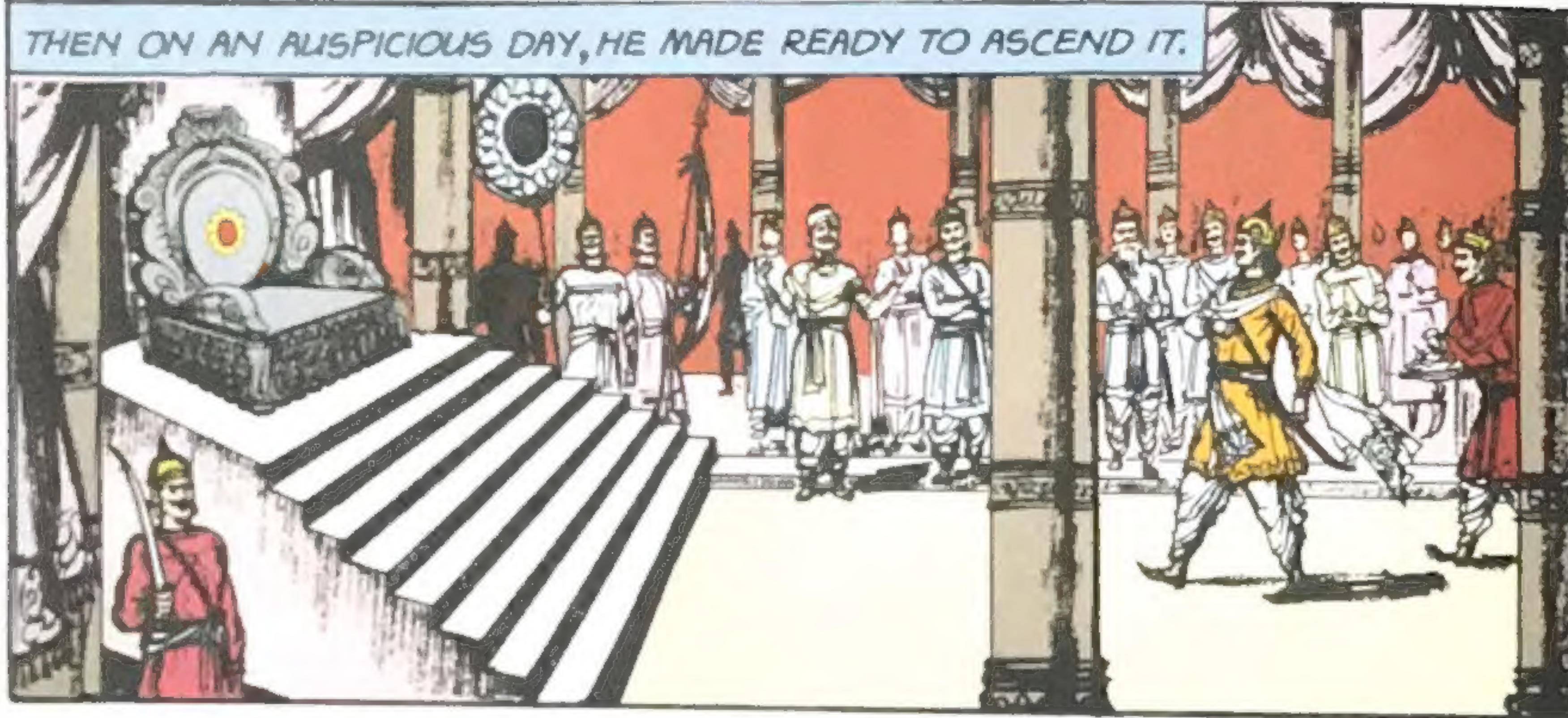
SO THE OFFERINGS WERE MADE AND THE THRONE WAS SHIFTED WITH EASE.



RAJA BHOJA HAD IT CARRIED TO DHARA WHERE IT WAS PLACED IN A SPECIALLY BUILT HALL.



THEN ON AN AUSPICIOUS DAY, HE MADE READY TO ASCEND IT.



A VOICE STOPPED HIM.

STOP! O KING! ONLY ONE POSSESSING ALL THE MAGNANIMITY AND THE OTHER RARE VIRTUES OF THE OWNER OF THIS THRONE MAY MOUNT IT.

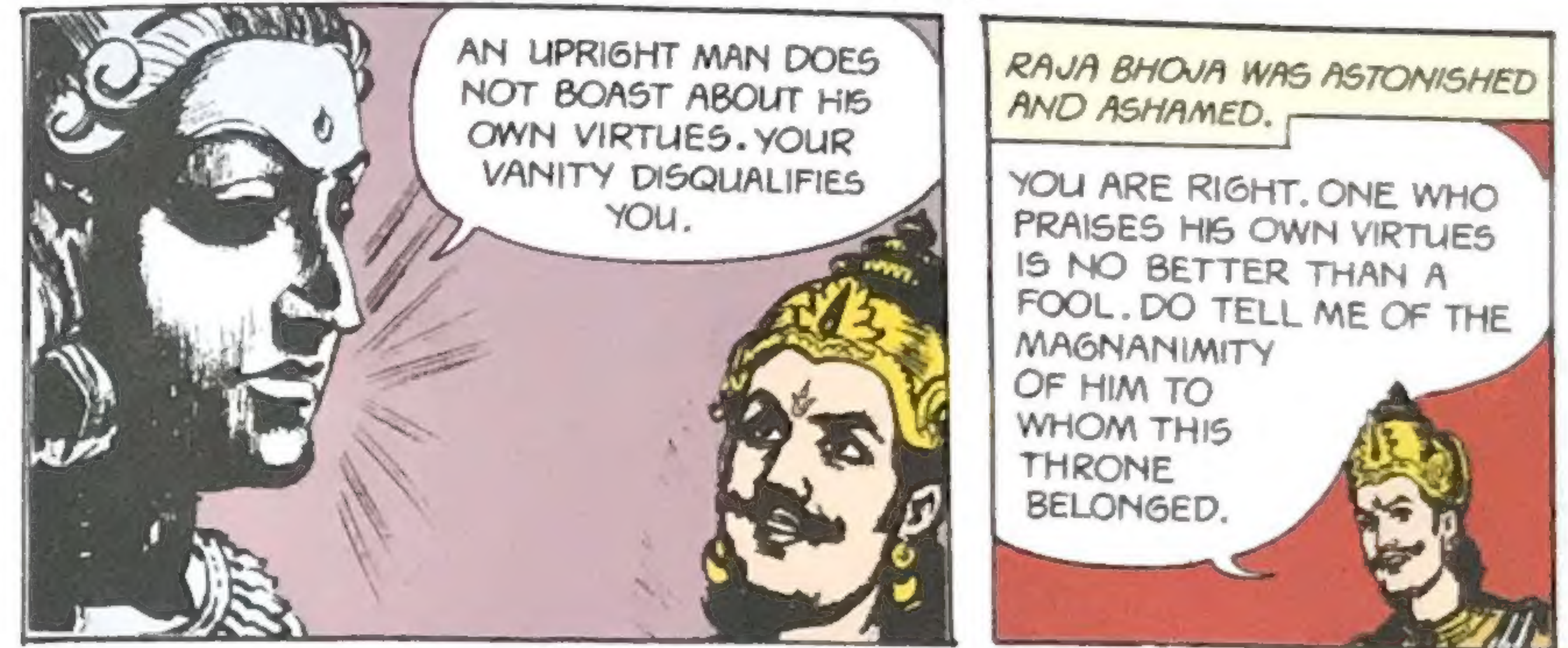
I POSSESS ALL THE VIRTUES NEEDED TO ASCEND THIS THRONE.



AN UPRIGHT MAN DOES NOT BOAST ABOUT HIS OWN VIRTUES. YOUR VANITY DISQUALIFIES YOU.

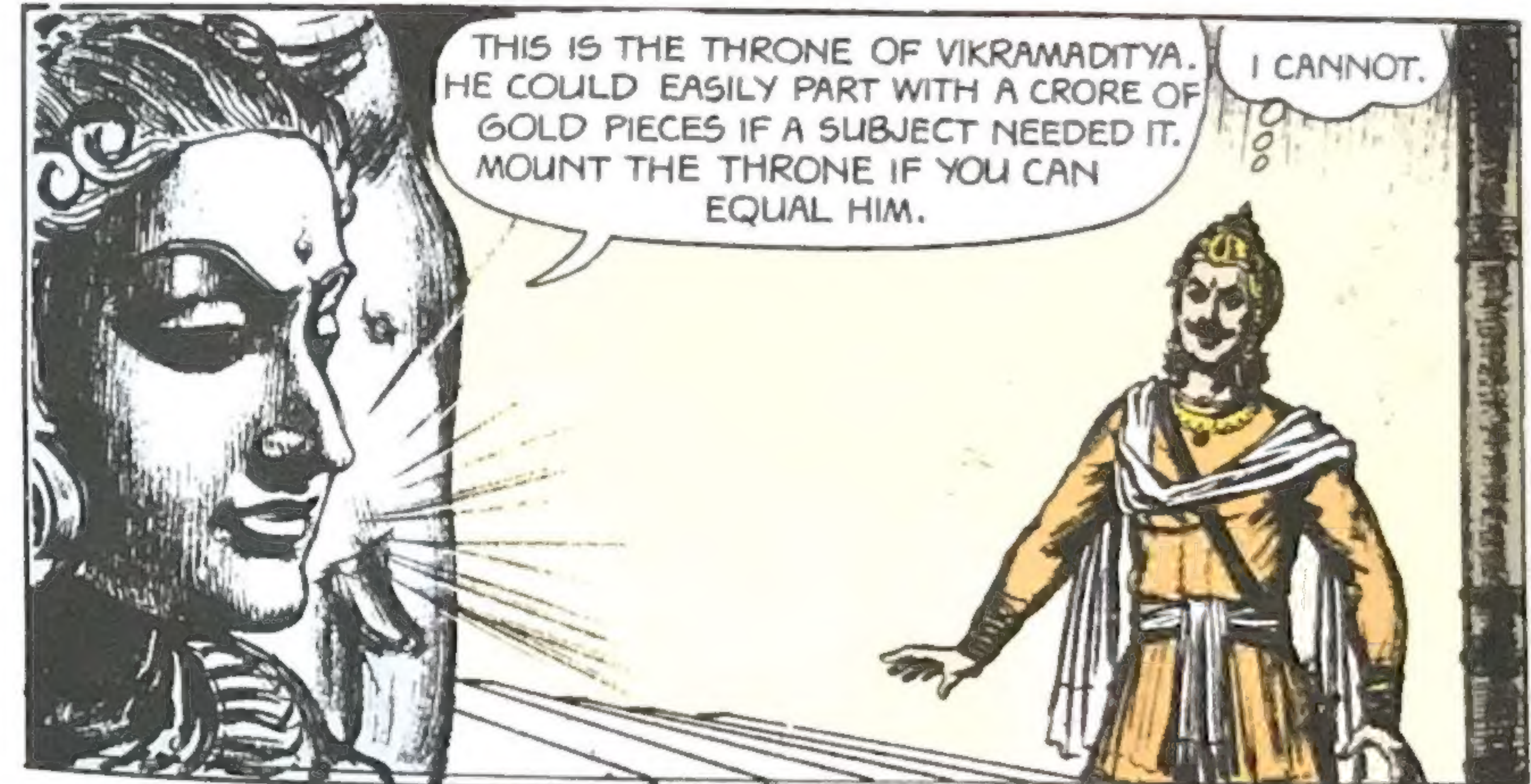
RAJA BHOJA WAS ASTONISHED AND ASHAMED.

YOU ARE RIGHT. ONE WHO PRAISES HIS OWN VIRTUES IS NO BETTER THAN A FOOL. DO TELL ME OF THE MAGNANIMITY OF HIM TO WHOM THIS THRONE BELONGED.



THIS IS THE THRONE OF VIKRAMADITYA. HE COULD EASILY PART WITH A CRORE OF GOLD PIECES IF A SUBJECT NEEDED IT. MOUNT THE THRONE IF YOU CAN EQUAL HIM.

I CANNOT.



IN THIS MANNER RAJA BHOJA MADE THIRTY-TWO ATTEMPTS TO MOUNT THE THRONE. EACH TIME A STATUE TOLD HIM A STORY DESCRIBING THE MAGNANIMITY OF RAJA VIKRAMADITYA. HE HAD TO HONESTLY ADMIT TO HIMSELF THAT HE WAS NOWHERE NEAR THE GREAT VIKRAMADITYA AS FAR AS KINGLY VIRTUES WENT.



AT LAST AFTER THE THIRTY-SECOND STATUE HAD TOLD ITS STORY ABOUT RAJA VIKRAMADITYA'S GREATNESS AND RAJA BHOJA HAD PATIENTLY AND HUMBLY HEARD IT—

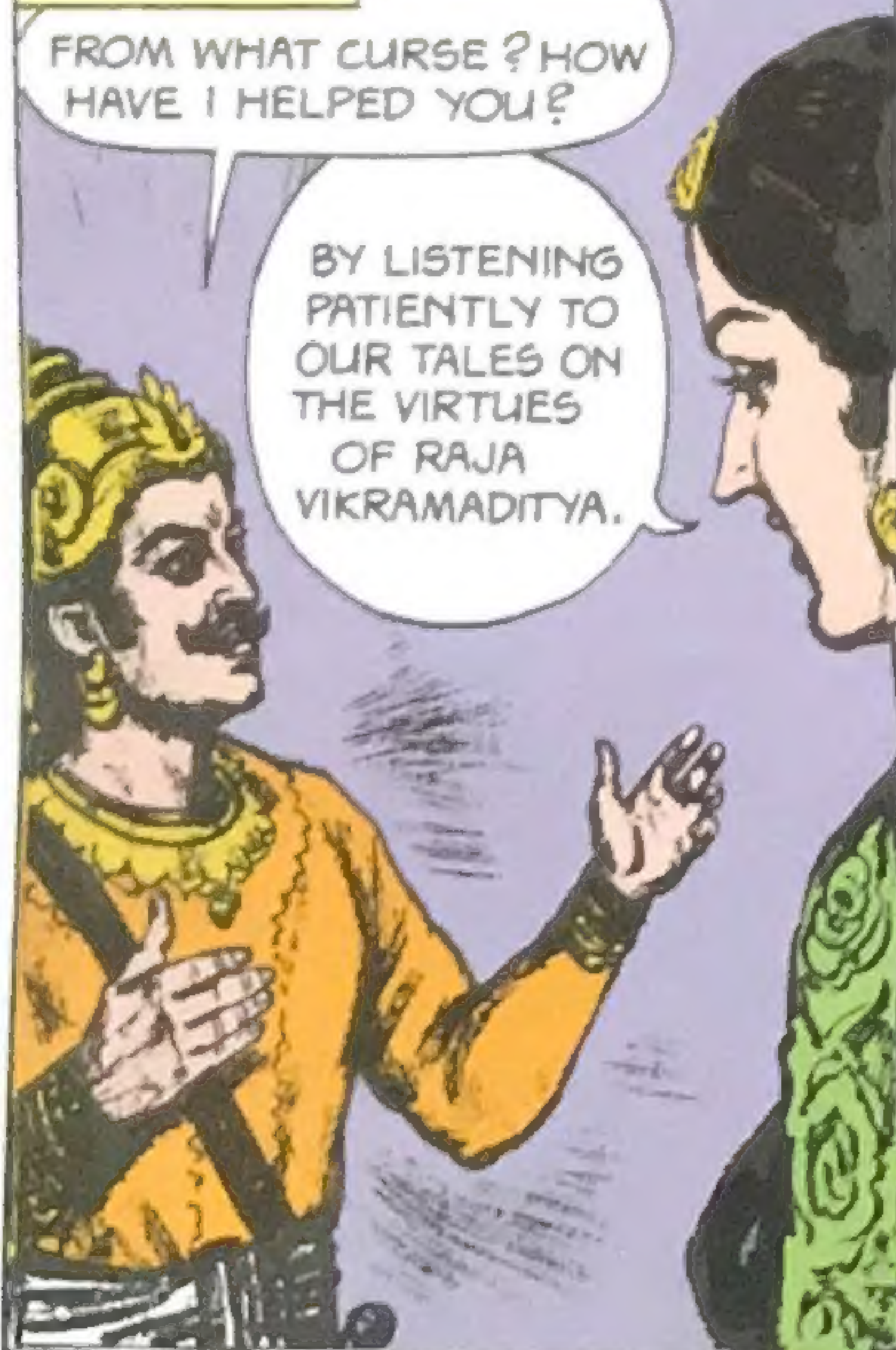


DO NOT REMAIN SILENT. YOU TOO ARE A GREAT, GLORIOUS, GENEROUS KING. YOUR PATIENCE AND MAGNANIMITY HAVE RELEASED US FROM A CURSE.

RAJA BHOJA WAS UTTERLY BEWILDERED.

FROM WHAT CURSE? HOW HAVE I HELPED YOU?

BY LISTENING PATIENTLY TO OUR TALES ON THE VIRTUES OF RAJA VIKRAMADITYA.



THEY TOLD HIM ALL ABOUT PARVATI'S CURSE AND HOW SHE HAD RELENDED. THEN —

IS THERE ANY WISH OF YOURS THAT WE CAN FULFIL?

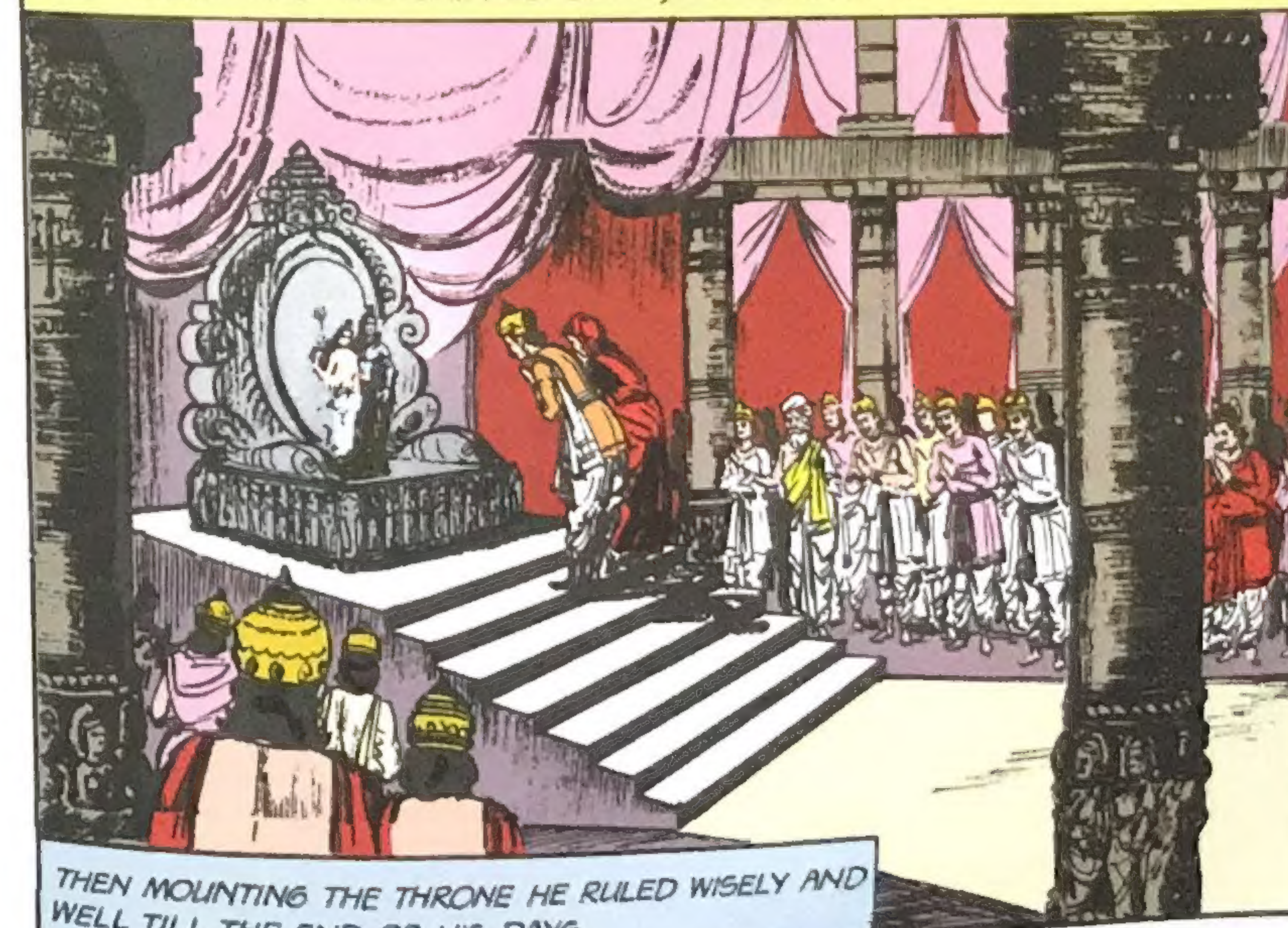


YES. LET THE ADVENTURES OF VIKRAMADITYA BECOME IMMORTAL UPON EARTH. LET ALL WHO HEAR THEM BE SAFE FROM ANY DANGER.

SO BE IT.



RAJA BHOJA PLACED THE THRONE IN A SHRINE INLAID WITH BRIGHT GOLD AND THE NINE PRECIOUS GEMS. UPON IT HE PLACED THE IMAGES OF SHIVA AND PARVATI AND WORSHIPPED BOTH, THE THRONE AND THE DEITIES.



THEN MOUNTING THE THRONE HE RULED WISELY AND WELL TILL THE END OF HIS DAYS.